

An Phoblacht

REPUBLICAN NEWS



DAY 57

FOR H-Block hunger-striker Raymond McCreech and Patsy O'Hare this Sunday is their fifty-seventh day on their fast, to the death if necessary, to achieve their just demands as republican political prisoners in the H-Blocks at Long Kesh. Full portraits of Raymond and Patsy are published on pages 26 to 29 inclusive. 'Raymond McCreech: a quiet, god-natural and decent republican' and 'Patsy O'Hare: a determined and courageous Derryman.' See also, page 4, 'Two becoming critical, with Hughes dead.'

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LAI D TO REST



Hughes, IRA Volunteer, H-Block hunger-striker and fearless soldier

THE FUNERAL OF FRANCIS HUGHES



● The hearse containing the remains of IRA Volunteer Francis Hughes was flanked, on Friday, by an IRA guard of honour, and followed by thousands through the lanes of South Derry, led by the family



A fitting response



● RUC sectarian thugs stopping Belfast cortege

THE IRA's RPG-7 rocket attack which ripped open an RUC jeep in Belfast, on Thursday night, took some of the cockiness out of the sectarian thugs who have been plaguing and shooting the nationalist youth of the city with a particular ferocity since the deaths of hunger-strikers Bobby Sands and Francis Hughes.

It was a fitting response but one which does not measure up to half the persecution inflicted upon the oppressed nationalist people by the uniformed loyalist thugs and their colleagues in khaki.

This last week of death and tragedy, grief and bereavement, sorrow and anger, spilling over into street resistance and a mounting series of IRA attacks on the Brits and the RUC, is the direct responsibility of the British government.

Following the deaths of first Bobby Sands and now Francis Hughes, people are outraged at the callousness symbolised by the cold-hearted Thatcher, who has rejected, not republican calls for a compromise, but even the appeals of Cardinal Tomas O'Fleach, Senator Edward Kennedy and the private pleadings of the weak-kneed Charles Haughey — a so-called 'sovereign' head of state who is being stripped daily of his political machismo in the eyes of his own supporters.

COMMANDING

Only those with their life on the line, or their

finger on the republican trigger, and their mass of supporters, have been proving something.

Irish republicans, whether on hunger-strike, on active service, or out there with petrol bombs or placards, have been upholding the principle of Irish independence, paid for in blood (and mostly their own), and have been commanding the attention of the peoples of the world.

This hunger-strike has turned thousands of nationalists into republicans overnight, has turned raw youth into disciplined men and women preparing for the ranks of the IRA, and has, as predicted if one hunger-striker died, created the fuel, and regenerated the support, for the next twelve years if that is how it must be.

CRACKED

When they took out the body of Bobby Sands past Francis Hughes' H-Block cell, Thatcher believed she would have cracked the prisoners and cracked the morale of the IRA.

But Francis Hughes was unbowed, as were Patsy O'Hara and Raymond McCreesh when his body went past their cells. Now two more names, two more photographs, two more fighters, Joe McDonnell and Brendan McLaughlin, have stepped forward into the public arena to be counted, realising that death is the price of their republicanism.

The stream of coffins from the H-Blocks will be paid for. Anyone from Elizabeth, Queen of England, down to Johnny Brit (and the RUC and UDR are inclusive), and the indifferent taxpayers who pay for the blood and who had better fork out more tax, will pay dearly for dragging tortured Ireland through more war, through more death and suffering.

Two becoming critical with Hughes dead

ON Tuesday evening Francis Hughes became the second political prisoner, in just over a week, to die on hunger-strike in the H-Blocks.

He had survived fifty-nine days without food, and despite his intense suffering he remained as determined as ever right up to the end.

As Francis Hughes' life ended on Tuesday, Patsy O'Hara and Raymond McCreesh, who are now becoming critical, were in their fifty-second day without food; Joe McDonnell was still suffering the initial hunger pangs as he moved into his fourth day on hunger-strike; and Brendan McLaughlin was preparing to replace his comrade, beginning his hunger-strike on Thursday.

COMA

Last Sunday, Francis was appointed, and by Monday his condition was so serious that his family were called to the prison.

They found Francis in an intermittent coma and completely blind. He could barely speak or hear during his periods of consciousness. He was unable to move, being physically exhausted.

However, he made it absolutely clear that the hunger-strike could only end when the British conceded the five just demands.

Late on Monday, Francis lapsed into a full coma, but, despite the imminence of his death, the prison regime continued to harass the

family. Only four members of the family were allowed at the bedside at any given time with the result that Francis' father could not be present when his son died. This vindictive treatment caused a great deal of unnecessary additional distress to the family.

On Tuesday, at 5.43 p.m., IRA Volunteer Francis Hughes died still fighting as an unbroken political prisoner.

VOMITS

Raymond McCreesh, who this Sunday is on his fifty-seventh day on hunger-strike, is having serious difficulties keeping down the necessary amount of water. When he drinks the water he vomits and he is also experiencing constant sickness.

Raymond has now lost over 34 lbs. in weight during the course of his hunger-strike.

By Friday he was in an extremely weakened condition. His eyesight was gone, his hearing was low, he found it difficult to speak, and he appeared, to his family visitor that day, to be on the point of slipping into semi-consciousness.

SUFFER

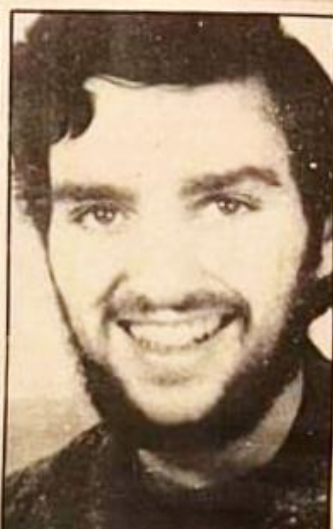
Judging by the previous rate of



● RAYMOND MCCREESH

deterioration of first Bobby Sands and then Francis Hughes, both Raymond and his comrade Patsy O'Hara will move into a critical stage within days.

Patsy O'Hara, who is also on his fifty-seventh day of hunger-strike



● PATSY O'HARA

this Sunday, is similarly experiencing the severe symptoms of a prolonged fast. He has lost 45 lbs. in weight, is having trouble with his eyesight and his hearing, and is suffering very bad stomach pains and intense headaches.

As Raymond and Patsy suffer

the symptoms of the last stages of fasting to death, Joe McDonnell from Belfast completes his first week and Brendan McLaughlin from North Derry takes the place of his comrade Francis Hughes in the continuing hunger strike in the H-Blocks.

Hunger-striker No.5

JOE McDONNELL

THE REPLACEMENT for the late Bobby Sands on the four-strong H-Block hunger-strike is another Belfast republican, who was captured simultaneously with Bobby in October 1976.

Thirty-year-old blanket man Joe McDonnell, imprisoned in H5-Block, joined the hunger-strike last Saturday, May 9th.

Born on September 14th 1950, Joe McDonnell is one of a family of nine children. He is married with two children, Bernadette, aged 10, and Joseph, aged 9. His wife's name is Goretti.

Joe McDonnell joined the Republican Movement shortly after the introduction of internment in August 1971. He had been living with his wife and in-laws in Horn Drive in the Lenadoon area of west Belfast but was turned out by the loyalist UDA.

In 1972 he was interned for a few months, first on the prison ship Maidstone and then in Long Kesh. In 1973 he was again arrested and interned in Long Kesh until 1974.

In October 1976 he was arrested after the IRA commercial bombing attack on the Balmoral Furnishing Company in Upper Dunsurry Lane on the outskirts of Belfast when Bobby Sands was also arrested.

There was a gun battle between the IRA and the RUC, when the latter arrived on the scene, and two of the Volunteers, Seamus Martin and Gabriel Corbett, were wounded. Joe McDonnell was arrested with three others, Bobby Sands, Sean Laverty and Seamus Finucane, in a car in which



one gun was recovered. They were brought to Castlereagh and were interrogated for six days during which time they were roughly treated.

They were all charged with possessing the one firearm and after eleven months on remand, Joe and his five comrades, who all refused to recognise the court, were sentenced in September 1977 to fourteen years' imprisonment.

Joe went on the blanket in the H-Blocks and forfeited his monthly visits rather than wear the prison uniform. His wife, Goretti, and their two children, have not seen him since September 1977.

Joe's brother, Frankie, is also on the blanket, is serving five years' imprisonment for IRA membership, and is due for release later this year.

Joe has now been on hunger-strike for political status, to the death if necessary, for one week.

Hunger-striker No.6

BRENDAN McLAUGHLIN

THE REPLACEMENT for the late Francis Hughes on the four-strong H-Block hunger-strike is another County Derry republican, who was captured simultaneously with former H-Block hunger-striker Tom McFeely in May 1976.

Twenty-nine-year-old blanket man Brendan McLaughlin, imprisoned in H5-Block, joined the hunger-strike last Thursday, May 14th.

Brendan McLaughlin is a single man from Greysteel, near Eglinton, in North Derry. He was reared on a small farm. His father died when he was twelve years of age.

After leaving school at fifteen he worked in a petrol station for two years and then on building sites. In 1970, at the age of eighteen, he joined in the civil rights struggle, and after the introduction of internment in August 1971 he joined the Republican Movement.

In September 1972, he was forced to go 'on the run' and went to live in the Free State. His mother died on Christmas Eve 1973.

In May 1974, he was arrested out of the house he was living in, was charged with withholding information, and was sentenced to four months in Portlaoise jail. In late 1974 he returned to Derry.

In May 1976, after a three-hour siege at



his house in North Derry, he, his thirty-one-year-old brother Michael, and former hunger-striker thirty-two-year-old Tom McFeely, were arrested.

When Brendan was being interrogated in Limavady RUC barracks he refused to eat or drink or co-operate in any way and was badly beaten.

In February 1977 Brendan was sentenced to 'twelve years' imprisonment. He immediately went on the blanket and forfeited his brief monthly visits rather than wear the prison uniform.

Brendan has now been on hunger-strike for political status, to the death if necessary, for several days.

Strasbourg diversion raised again

EVEN after the deaths of hunger-strikers Bobby Sands and Francis Hughes, the proposal and prospects of an intervention from the European Commission on Human Rights appeared to be Free State premier Charles Haughey's main crutch from falling completely under the growing clamour for the dismissal of the British ambassador and an end to the Dublin/London summit collaborationist talks.

BY PETER AARLIS & KEVIN BURKE

Shortly after Bobby Sands was buried on Thursday 7th May, Paddy Lalor, leader of Fianna Fail Euro-MPs, called upon the British Conservative Euro-MPs 'in the friendliest possible spirit', and on Sir James Scott Hopkins, their leader (who, with particularly explicit English chauvinistic venom, had earlier called the hunger-strikers 'murdering bastards'), to 'show understanding and co-operation'.

He was ennobled by them, and received little solidarity from Belgian Ernest Ganne, leader of the largest political group in the European parliament, the 'socialists', who refused to lay the blame for the present situation at the door of the British government.

This political position would, without doubt, be decisive in any judgement reached by Commissioners from the Strasbourg commission, were they to intervene.

INTRANSIGENT

Commenting on the funeral of Bobby Sands, Northern direct-ruler Humphrey Atkins reiterated — as did British premier Margaret Thatcher, after her meeting with SDLP leader John Hume on Wednesday night — the British government's intransigent stance and repudiated any lessening in prison regulations in response to the five demands as being equivalent to recognising the republicans as political prisoners.

On Friday week, May 8th, both Haughey and his main opposition spokesperson, Fine Gael leader, Garrett FitzGerald, called for the urgent intervention of the European Commissioners. Haughey said such an intervention offered the only hope of 'achieving a humanitarian and practical solution', while FitzGerald suggested that the Commission should set aside its bureaucratic procedures and perform its functions in accordance with the spirit of the Convention on Human Rights.

Both Haughey and FitzGerald are worried that the impotence of the constitutional approach to this British-provoked crisis will continue to generate support for the IRA.

But all approaches to Thatcher were rejected. Speaking at a Scottish Conservative Party conference last weekend, she announced that the loyalist veto remained in force and rejected criticism of British intransigence.

On American television, direct-ruler Humphrey Atkins made the usual use of himself, when attempting to defend the British stance. He wandered into confused ramblings about 'the tragedy of Ireland' over the last sixty years and was attacked by loyalists for seemingly questioning the union!

REJECTED

Thatcher also rejected an appeal for prison reforms from the so-called four Irish-American horsemen — Senator Edward Kennedy, Senator Daniel Moynihan, New York governor Hugh Carey and speaker of the House of Representatives, Tip O'Neill.

She rejected a suggestion for reforms on prison clothing and free association from John Hume, and she ignored a plea from Cardinal O'Fiaich, after the death of Francis Hughes, to take action to resolve the crisis before there was another death.

However, the idea of a diversionary intervention from the European Commissioners continued to be revived throughout the week, with Brian Lenihan visiting Strasbourg on Thursday night to discuss ways of introducing the Commissioners. But, although there have been rumours of the Dublin government taking out a complaint, this seems highly unlikely.

JOINED

Last weekend, the Free State Labour Party leader Frank Cluskey joined with Haughey and FitzGerald in suggesting the intervention of the Commissioners to resolve the crisis. (All three main Free State political parties are opposed to political status and are suggesting further prison reform for a relaxation of prison rules) to reach a settlement.



Free State premier Haughey has refused to break off diplomatic and collaborationist links with Britain, in support of the hunger strikers' five demands.



After two meetings with Free State premier Charles Haughey last Wednesday afternoon and Thursday morning, hunger strikers' sisters Elizabeth O'Hara (right) and Teresa McGeehan (center) — and were here accompanied by National H Block/Armagh Committee member Vincent Doherty (left) — said that they were very disappointed, that Haughey had refused to call directly on Thatcher, and that he was not willing to answer whether he supported the prisoners' five demands.

Cluskey went further and urged Haughey to directly and publicly appeal to Thatcher to reconsider her position. Something which Haughey has refrained from doing, even when, after the death of Francis Hughes, he made his strongest statement so far, reminiscent of Jack Lynch's 1969 'I shall not stand idly by' speech.

Haughey's 1969 ally, Neil Blaney, who actually visited Bobby Sands during his hunger-strike, made a bold call on Haughey to publicly challenge Thatcher. He said that a failure on her part to respond favourably to his intervention should be understood to mean cessation of all border co-operation on security, together with withdrawal of the Criminal Jurisdiction Act and the Offences

against the State (Amendment) Act. He said Haughey should simultaneously make every effort to galvanise world opinion.

DEATH

The death of Francis Hughes on Tuesday caused Haughey once again to postpone an election announcement, which, on this occasion was due mid-week. Fianna Fail conventions to select candidates and space booked in this weekend's papers for Fianna Fail election advertisements have all been cancelled.

Haughey is afraid of putting to the test his boasts of a special relationship with Thatcher, primarily because in the past she has publicly rebuked his Foreign Minister Brian Lenihan, and snubbed the three Euro-MPs from the Free State who visited Bobby Sands, and more recently rejected a major appeal from SDLP leader John Hume. Like Hume, Haughey clearly fears an exposure of the constitutional approach to British rule which would lead people to conclude that

the IRA is right and armed struggle the only solution.

DIFFICULTIES

There appears to be no appreciation of Haughey's difficulties and the future instability of British rule and influence in Ireland from anyone in Britain, least of all Thatcher.

There has been almost unanimous backing from all British parties for Thatcher's intransigence, but an attempt, coincidentally on the evening of Francis Hughes' death, by some members of Labour's Home Policy Committee, to repudiate the current bipartisan policy failed. And, for making 'disruptive' comments on the situation in the North, the Labour shadow cabinet was reported on Thursday night to be seriously considering asking leading left-winger Tony Benn to resign. Earlier he had described the partition of Ireland as 'a crime against the Irish people'.

BY PETER ARNLS

HARDLY before people had even recovered from the shock and trauma of Bobby Sands' death came the devastating news just before six o'clock last Tuesday evening that his comrade, Francis Hughes, on the fifty-ninth day of his hunger-strike, and in a coma, had died at 5.43 p.m. in the H-Block prison hospital.

At Francis Hughes' bedside, when he died, were four members of his family — his sisters Noreen, Maria and Vera, and his brother Roger — and Fr. Murphy, a prison chaplain; although in the last few days of his life the prison administration had been placing unnecessary and petty restrictions on the numbers who could sit by Francis' bed.

IMMEDIATE

There was an immediate reaction even on the streets of Belfast, Derry, and Dublin, with the two Northern cities experiencing bitter street rioting. And the British army and RUC, obviously with a brief to crack down on any public expression of sympathy, unleashed a wave of terror against peaceful protesters as well as rioters.

The fact that there has initially been less overt international reaction to the death of Francis Hughes (even apart from the domination of the news by the unsuccessful attempt on the life of the Pope) than to that of Bobby Sands, is mistakenly being interpreted by British premier Thatcher that the protest and concern have reached a peak which no subsequent deaths can match.

While undoubtedly the measured statements of Free State premier Haughey are tempering the attitudes of observing concerned foreign governments and politicians, the appalling prospect of the H-Blocks emptying through a procession of continual hunger-striker's coffins is horrifying Irish opinion which is moving against Haughey's reticence.

IRA

In a statement issued shortly after Francis' death the IRA extended condolences to the Hughes family. "On the death of their courageous son Frank after fifty-nine days on hunger-strike in the murderous H-Blocks of Long Kesh," the statement continued, "he was one of this struggle's bravest soldiers and never shirked in the face of the English enemy nor in its clutches."

His fellow comrades in the H-Blocks sent their sympathies to the Hughes family and stated: "In the liberation struggle he was an outstanding soldier, endowed and strengthened by the knowledge that foreign occupation of Ireland and foreign control of Irish destinies infringed on the Irish people's God-given right to liberty."

"His death, coming just one week after Bobby Sands, represents the sense of conviction which exists among Irish republican POWs. We are not, under any circumstances whatsoever, going to surrender our principles."

"Bobby Sands and Frank Hughes have given their very lives for those principles and we cannot, and will not, dishonour them, or ourselves, by forsaking those principles. Therefore the hunger-strike will continue until our demands are met and one of our number will replace Frank Hughes on the hunger-strike." (On Thursday morning the replacement was announced as Brendan McLaughlin from North Derry.)

HAUGHEY

Gerry Adams, on behalf of Sinn Féin, offered condolences and said: "Against overwhelming public opinion in Ireland and abroad the British government, by its refusal to grant political prisoners their reasonable demands, stands completely indicted of the murder of yet another Irish freedom fighter. Mrs. Thatcher should now accept that her attempts to stare down this hunger-strike have failed. Charles Haughey must also accept his responsibility, as his silence is clearly being used by Thatcher to exonerate the British government's intransigent position."

The widespread pressure on Haughey did force a response from him and he made the hitherto empty threat that "no Irish government can be indifferent to a prospect of these deaths continuing."

He also made his by now ritual, and useless, but politically popular, contribution to resolving partition by announcing that the deaths had "confirmed once more, that Northern Ireland, as at present constituted, is no longer a viable political entity. A new political arrangement is the only possible way forward to peace."

Immediate reaction



● The militancy of nationalist youth on the streets has clearly shown the North in its true light as a war zone, ripped away the political 'middle ground', and left the Brits 'normalisation' policy in tatters

However, Haughey still refrains from publicly calling upon Thatcher, with whom he allegedly has 'a special relationship', to grant the prisoners their demands.

Even after meeting, last Wednesday, Teresa McCreesh and Elizabeth Kelly, whose brothers Raymond McCreesh and Patsy O'Hara are on hunger-strike, Haughey still resisted appeals from them to publicly call upon Thatcher to grant the prisoners their five demands. The deaths of Bobby Sands and Francis Hughes also effectively ruled out the plans he had for dissolving Leinster House last Friday and announcing a general election for June 11th.

O'FIAICH

Cardinal O'Fiaich responded to the death of Francis Hughes by asking the hunger-strikers to end their fast. He said the British government could have solved the crisis on several occasions during the past three years. "How many more Irishmen must go to their graves inside and outside the prison

before intransigence gives way to a constructive effort to find a solution?" he asked.

The cardinal, in a telegram which he sent to Thatcher, said: "I now repeat my earnest request to you and the Cabinet to abandon the inflexible policy in Northern Ireland regarding prison dress and the fraternisation of prisoners at work or recreation."

"In God's name, don't allow another death. I beseech you to make the move immediately... Please send a representative to talk to the prisoners' spokesmen..."

This Thatcher refused to do.

AMERICAN

However, Thatcher did reply to an earlier criticism by four leading Irish-American politicians, one of whom, Senator Edward Kennedy, again criticised the British government upon the death of Francis Hughes. He said: "It is a death that might have been avoided by a more flexible approach from the British government."

In his reply, Thatcher said her govern-

ment was not inflexible or intransigent and could not and would not change its H-Block prison policy. Senator Kennedy immediately accused Thatcher of 'unfeeling inflexibility' which would achieve 'nothing but more death'. He asked: "Surely it is time for Britain to break the endless spiral of death in Northern Ireland?"

HUME

Thatcher also rejected a plea from SDLP leader John Hume, the so-called 'daring' of the British administration who keeps the Catholics on 'the middle path'. He had a well pre-advertised but not surprisingly useless hour-and-a-half meeting with her last Wednesday. Even before he met her to discuss the H-Blocks his whole purpose was undermined by television political commentators, obviously briefed by Whitehall officials, who told viewers that Thatcher would be making no response.

Hume later said that he received a "list 'no'" to his suggestions (on clothes and free association) which have been criticised by republicans and the prisoners for separating them from the five demands as a 'package settlement'.

Hume's meeting will probably have done him no harm politically — as he can claim to have done his best but failed. But his criticism of Thatcher (he described her as being 'in implacable mood') was hardly harsh enough. And he still has not supported the five demands, nor exercised all his political muscle by, for example, breaking off all meetings with Atkins and announcing a policy of SDLP withdrawal from the councils after next week's local government elections.

Loyalists have been more than satisfied by Thatcher's 'no surrender' stance over the hunger-strike because it augurs well for the reinforcement of the Union. They have been uneasy though over the Catholics of Turf Lodge and Derry defending themselves against tanks and the rifles of the British army and RUC.

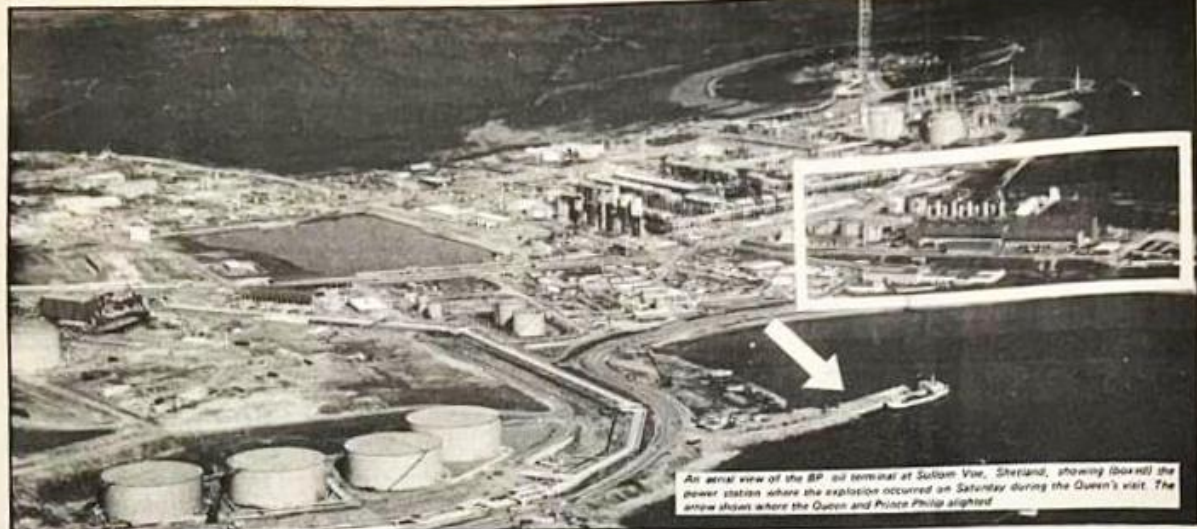
Leading Official Unionists have been calling for petrol bombers to be shot, for the reintroduction of water cannon and tear gas, and the deployment of more SAS units along the border.

TATTERS

Thatcher's inflexibility is having a disastrous effect (from a British point of view) on the nationalist community in the North and the 'normalisation' policy is in tatters: with the image of the murderous, sectarian RUC as tarnished as ever; with the international media closely following the course of the courageous hunger-strike in the prison camp; and with the militancy of nationalist youths on the streets combining with the British military presence to give the North its correct image as a war zone; and, earth-shatteringly for the British public, the English Football Association cancelled their international soccer match against the Northern Ireland team due to be played in Belfast this Saturday.

British political reaction to the death of Francis Hughes has been one of continuing support for Thatcher (including endorsement from a public opinion poll). Only the intervention of Labour left-winger Tony Benn caused a minor ruffle, although he personally is being threatened with political ostracism and being given the 'option' of resigning.

In New York members of the city's largest labour union have thrown their support behind the hunger-strikers. They have promised to supply money and men to stage demonstrations against the British. And in Boston, the city council has renamed the street in which the British consulate is situated. It is now called Francis Hughes Avenue.



An aerial view of the BP oil terminal at Sullom Voe, Shetland, showing (boxed) the power station where the explosion occurred on Saturday during the Queen's visit. The arrow shows where the Queen and Prince Philip alighted.

IRA attempt to kill Queen

FOLLOWING the IRA bomb attack at an oil terminal on the Shetland Islands off the northern coast of Scotland whilst the British monarch, Queen Elizabeth, was on an official visit there last Saturday, the IRA pointed out that had they managed to place the bomb close enough to her then she would now be dead.

This dire threat was issued through the Irish Republican Publicity Bureau in Dublin and was signed by P. O'Neill.

The IRA pointed out that: "While the British occupation of Ireland continues then members of the British ruling class and administration will continue to be subject to IRA attacks. They have a choice. The Irish people, who live under British terror, do not."

EXPLOSION

The midday explosion at the Sullom Voe oil terminal on Saturday was in the terminal's main power station, a quarter of a mile away from where the Queen and Prince Philip were attending the terminal's inauguration ceremony. The pair were within minutes of formally opening the terminal, having arrived at the Shetland Islands in the royal yacht.

The explosion, caused by 7lbs. of gelignite, was in Europe's largest oil terminal, owned by British Petroleum, where millions of gallons of oil are daily piped in from the

North Sea oilfields. The explosion happened at a point high in the power station and debris was scattered over a congested area.

Saturday's IRA operation was a breach of Elizabeth's security comparable to a previous one, in 1977, during the Queen's jubilee year visit to the occupied six counties of Ireland, when bombs lurked in the grounds of Coleraine University exploded shortly before, and after, a royal visit.

At that time the British administration denied that bombs had been placed, but the IRA's claim was later confirmed by British army Brigadier James Glover (now Commander of Land Forces in the North), in captured 'document 37', who admitted that a bomb on a long (too long!) delay electronic timer had been inside the university grounds during the Queen's visit.

BREACH

Last weekend, in order to

minimise the loss of face to the British establishment caused by yet another IRA breach of their bejewelled mascot's security, the Scottish police, oil terminal officials, and the British media presumably orchestrated by British Home Office officials — played down both the attack and the IRA's Saturday lunchtime claims of responsibility to Reuters press agency and, via the Belfast republican press centre, to the media at large.

A reporter, who was covering the inauguration, said that when newsmen made on the spot enquiries on Saturday lunchtime about the IRA's claim, they were told by police that it was a hoax, Elizabeth's entourage, including security officers, dismissed it as a hoax and smiling senior police officers did nothing to disturb that view.

From Saturday to Wednesday the official line changed gradually, day by day. From no explosion, on Saturday; to an explosion by an



The British monarch showing the flag in Ireland in August 1977. The IRA achieved its previous major breach of her security at Coleraine University during the jubilee visit.

unknown cause, on Sunday evening; to an explosion, not due to a technical or equipment fault, as BP attempted on Tuesday to shift the

blame away from themselves; and finally, as Scottish police confirmed on Wednesday, to an explosion caused by high explosives!

Red faces after green alert

POLICE FORCES throughout Britain were put on alert last weekend by Scotland Yard's anti-terrorist squad, after a London garage attendant reported seeing a man with a Sten sub-machine gun, who spoke with an Irish brogue.

But the nationwide search to pre-empt a feared IRA campaign in Britain, following the death of Bobby Sands less than a week before, ended when police swooped — in a full-scale operation involving a police helicopter — on a man as he drove a car out of an Exeter garage. The man, his wife and eight-year-old son, and two others, were arrested at gun-point and led away.

Five hours later there were red faces at the local police station and at 'the Yard's' 'crack' anti-terrorist unit when they released thirty-eight-year-old Exeter builder Dave Brooke, whose Devon accent had been mistaken for an Irish one, during a weekend trip to London.

And the Sten gun — well, it turned out to be a 'fearsome-looking' car jack!

THATCHER SCARE

HOT on the heels of the IRA's successful breach of the British Queen Elizabeth's security last weekend, with the bomb explosion at the Sullom Voe oil terminal in the Shetlands, comes news of a security 'scare' involving British premier Margaret Thatcher.

In spite of a major step-up in security surrounding Thatcher following the deaths of the hunger-strikers, it has been revealed, in Friday's 'Daily Mirror', that a copy of all her private and public engagements for the next six days was found lying on a table at the House of Commons.

A major furore has been caused by this lapse, that resulted in the most confidential document, which

even includes the times of Thatcher's frequent hairdressing appointments, leaving the confines of No. 10 Downing Street from where it is strictly never meant to move.

An official investigation is now underway as to how it became available, perhaps even to the eyes of the IRA sympathisers who are supposedly lurking in the ranks of the British Labour Party.



IRA ATTACKS TAKE THEIR TOLL

IRA ATTACKS against British occupation forces in the North dramatically escalated following, firstly, the Belfast funeral of republican hunger-striker Bobby Sands on Thursday afternoon, May 7th, and then, secondly, the death of Francis Hughes, on Tuesday evening, May 12th, who also died in the H-Blocks at British hands.

The attacks, resulting in serious injury to several British soldiers, have been against a background of popular street violence directed against riot-clad British troops and RUC gunmen prowling the fringes of nationalist ghettos and driving through the streets in their armoured tanks and cars.

A major blow to the morale of the RUC, and to their insatiable drive to inflict maximum suffering on the nationalist population, was delivered, on Thursday night in Belfast, in a successful IRA attack using an RPG-7 rocket launcher against an RUC landrover.

One RUC man was killed and four others injured, one critically, when the rocket hit the back of the vehicle, pierced the armour plating and exploded inside blowing off the roof, as its occupants prepared to launch another plastic bullet attack on youths on the Springfield Road near its junction with Whiterock Road.

ROCKET ATTACK

The excellent IRA attack on the vehicle, from a range of approximately one hundred yards, resulted in the first death of an RUC man under rocket attack in a vehicle.

The effect of the blow is emphasised by the fact that the RPG-7 had not been used for some time by the IRA in the North and British army intelligence apparently believed that all had been captured.

The Russian-made RPG-7, which is fired from a hand-held launch tube, has been used on several occasions in the past during IRA attacks on British army and RUC bases with varying success.

Thursday's successful operation is a pointer to the expertise of IRA active service units now operating in the current upsurge of republican military activity.

TYRONE BOMBS

Following Bobby Sands' death on Tuesday 5th May, over subsequent days (as reported in last week's *An Phoblacht/Republican News*), there were a number of attacks on troops and RUC men in Belfast, Derry city, and South Armagh, resulting, in particular, in the killing of an RUC man in north Belfast.

In County Tyrone, on the evening of Wednesday 6th May, the day after Bobby Sands' death, there were a number of IRA commercial bomb attacks.

Considerable damage was caused to the golf club in Fintona by two bombs. The Half-Way House public bar (which was used by the RUC), between Cookstown and Pomeroy, was bombed.

Two bombs exploded at a supermarket on the Cabra Road, Dungannon, and an explosion damaged the offices of Finlay's Concrete Products, also in Dungannon.

Five shots were fired at the RUC on the Donaghmore Road but



● An IRA rocket exploded inside an RUC landrover blowing off the roof and killing one of the occupants

no hits were claimed by the IRA. Rioting in Dungannon continued for the second successive night and three RUC men were injured in an IRA hand-grenade attack in Ann Street. The RUC were eventually driven out of the nationalist west ward of Dungannon and youths established a semi 'no go' area.

BARRACKS BOMBED

Last weekend, two British army barracks were mortar bombed by the IRA in separate attacks.

Two British soldiers were injured in a mortar bomb and gun attack on Newtownhamilton barracks in South Armagh on Friday night, May 8th. It was almost a carbon copy of the rocket blitz on the village barracks two years ago when a soldier was killed.

Nine missiles were fired from the back of a lorry in Newry Street in this latest attack on the fortified target, which suffered considerable damage. The mortars were set off with an electronic timing device from the unarmoured lorry.

As troops moved in to examine the lorry it blew up, although none of the soldiers, who also came under IRA gunfire, were injured.

The following night, Saturday, Roslea barracks in County Fermanagh came under mortar bomb attack from the IRA.

Three British soldiers were injured, one seriously, when the missiles hit a hut inside the complex and set it on fire. The mortars were fired from a lorry placed in position three hundred yards away.

They were detonated by remote control, but, unlike the mortar attack on Newtownhamilton barracks the previous night, there was not a self-destruct mechanism on the lorry.

BELFAST ATTACKS

Between the funeral of Bobby Sands and the death of Francis Hughes there were a number of specifically claimed IRA attacks on British troops and RUC men in Belfast.

On Friday 8th May, a single shot was fired at troops on the Monagh Road in Turf Lodge in the west of the city. No hit was claimed.

During the evening, ten shots were fired at the RUC in Etna Drive in Ardoyne in the north of the city. Four of the RUC men were injured



earlier, in order to launch the attack. One Brit was hit in the leg, and the other in the arm. One of them was later said to be 'seriously ill' in hospital.

During Tuesday evening, May 12th, following news of the death of Francis Hughes, there were - against a background of fierce rioting, including petrol bombing - numerous gun attacks on British troops and RUC men in nationalist areas of the city.

These included attacks in Andersonstown, Lenadoon, Twinbrook, Turf Lodge, Ballymurphy, Beechmount, St. James, Lower Falls, Ardoyne, and Old Park. A soldier was slightly injured when his patrol came under fire in the Upper Springfield Road area.

On Wednesday evening the attacks continued.

In particular, more than half-a-dozen shots were fired at the RUC in one ambush in Beechmount in the west of the city; whilst a British soldier was seriously injured in the chest, and rushed to hospital, following a bomb attack on a foot patrol passing the junction of Herbert Street and Crumlin Road in the north of the city.

On Thursday evening, the IRA mounted a gun attack on a British army footpatrol in Ross Road in the lower Falls. Although no hits were admitted by the British army a military ambulance was brought to the scene of the ambush. As in all other attacks through the week the Volunteers returned safely to base.

DERRY ATTACKS

Again, in Derry, there were IRA gun and bomb attacks on British troops between the funeral of Bobby Sands and the death of Francis Hughes, and the attacks escalated following news of Francis Hughes' death.

On Thursday week, May 7th, an RUC man received shrapnel wounds in his arm and legs when a bomb exploded near him in the Fountain area of the city.

During Friday afternoon, shots were fired at soldiers and RUC men in four different attacks, but no hits were claimed.

Gun attacks continued against a background of rioting. On Sunday, more than twenty petrol bombs, six blast bombs and acid bombs were thrown at British troops and RUC men in William Street and at the Butcher's gate area.

On Monday night a British army mobile patrol came under fire. Enemy fire was returned but there were no casualties on either side.

As elsewhere in the North, gun attacks and rioting were more numerous and intense in Derry city following the death of Francis Hughes on Tuesday evening, than the response one week previously to the death of Bobby Sands.

More than three hundred petrol bombs were thrown by rioters in the hours following Hughes' death. The city's library headquarters was virtually razed by petrol bombs, causing more than half-a-million pounds worth of damage.

Popular



• Hundreds of young, and not so young, men and women openly confront the British army and RUC



• Local people use heavy mechanical digger and commandeered vehicles to block entry into the nationalist ghettos



• Behind make-shift barricades nationalist youths wait for the enemy

SPORADIC but intense bouts of rioting continued over the past week in many areas in the North, with some districts fighting non-stop battles with the British army and RUC, as popular anger flared in response to Britain's death policy in the H-Blocks.

Following the tragic news on Tuesday that Francis Hughes, the second hunger-striker, had died in Long Kesh, hundreds of youths took to the streets armed with petrol, acid and blast bombs to confront British forces. The tense and widespread rioting lasted into the early hours of Wednesday morning in many nationalist areas.

Rioting, often escalated by the provocative behaviour of the Brits and RUC, was still heavy in a few areas of Belfast and Derry, last weekend, following the explosion of rioters on to the streets after the death of Bobby Sands.

BELFAST

In Belfast, at Divis flats, local youths kept up continuous battles with the RUC and Brits, and attempts to penetrate the area were met with whistle-blowing and bin-lid banging.

Rioting on a lesser scale also occurred in Ardoyne and on the Falls Road. The RUC admitted that in a matter of days fifteen hundred petrol bombs had been thrown at them in Belfast.

On Monday night the British army made attempts to remove barricades which had been erected in the Twinbrook estate, since before the funeral of Bobby Sands. The incursions met with a fierce resistance as local people fought in defence of their area.

DIED

On Tuesday evening, at about quarter-to-six, news spread that Francis Hughes had died on the fifty-ninth day of his hunger-strike. Growing anger and frustration burst onto the streets as hundreds of young, and not so young, men and women prepared for open confrontation with the British army and the RUC.

Barricades went up immediately in many areas and petrol and acid bombs were manufactured openly on the streets, particularly in Belfast and Derry. Early sortie into the areas were made by mobile enemy patrols before barricades went up and the RUC and Brits used this opportunity to inflict as much damage as possible.

Plastic bullets were fired at crowds banging bin-lids, and peaceful pickets were disrupted. Many injuries resulted from these attacks, including the fatal injury of a fourteen-year-old girl in Linsodown. Hatred for the Brits was further inflamed in this way.

DERRY

Heavy rioting broke out in Derry, Belfast, Dungannon and Lurgan.

In Derry hundreds of youths launched an attack on Rosemount RUC barracks using petrol bombs. Seven blast bombs were also thrown at the barracks and an army hut inside the grounds was set on fire.

Rioting also took place in the centre of the town where petrol and blast bombs were again thrown at the RUC and the Brits.

In the Waterside there was strong resistance from the Gobbins area with several petrol

(Continued on next page)

anger flares

(Continued from previous page)

bombs landing directly on British army vehicles. During the night Brits in the Shantallow area used a heavy mechanical digger to wreck the local Sinn Féin/H Block centre.

PRESSURE

In Belfast, the Brits and RUC were clearly under heavy pressure, withdrawing totally from many areas. Roads were blocked and heavy rioting continued until the early hours in Andersonstown, Twinbrook, Ballymurphy, Lema-doon, Short Strand, Beechmount, St. James, Lower Falls, Clonard, Ardoyne, and the Markets.

From around 8 p.m. the Brits and RUC disappeared from much of the Falls Road leaving the area to the crowds of masked youths who controlled the streets.

In New Barnsley an official British officer received a lesson in caution when a petrol bomb set him ablaze. The incident was flashed around the television screens of the world. Acid and petrol bombs rained down on Brit and RUC vehicles in the Divis flats (as usual) and in the Markets.

DUNGANNON

In Dungannon, following a large rally in Ann Street, rioting began in the George's Street area, during which the offices of the *Tyrone Courier* were set alight. Rioting continued until the early hours in this area, while another battle was under way in the Ballygawley Road.

Several vehicles were commandeered and set alight, and a timber yard was also set on fire. The RUC used live rounds in addition to plastic bullets in an unsuccessful attempt to contain the popular resistance.

In Lurgan, street battles were also fought during the evening in the Toghnevan and Shankill areas, while rioting also broke out in Craigavon.

With the removal of Francis Hughes' remains to his home in



Bellaghy a period of mourning began which brought an uneasy and unreal calm to most areas.

But by Wednesday it was clear that within the nationalist areas there are growing numbers who are losing faith in the feasibility of peaceful protests in the face of British intransigence in the H-Blocks and armed force on the streets.



• Bin-lid banging on Tuesday evening, outside the Republican Press Centre on Belfast's Falls Road, announces the death of hunger-striker Francis Hughes.

Mood in Dublin changes

BY KEVIN BURKE

FOLLOWING the deaths of the hunger-strikers there has been a change in the mood of demonstrators in the twenty-six counties, particularly in Dublin city.

With the death of Bobby Sands on Tuesday 5th May, there was a dominant mood of sadness and the silent marches in his honour reflected this mood.

But the growing anger was briefly evident on the following evening when after a GPO vigil, a hundred or so youths slipped the provocative garb lines, appearing for the first time in riot gear, and smashed windows and cars in the prosperous Dawson Street and Grafton Street area of the city.

This smouldering threat to the stability of the Free State was illustrated on Thursday evening in the most deprived inner city area of Sean McDermott Street and Gloucester Diamond.

In incidents not linked to any hunger-strike protest, though obviously inspired by the events of previous nights in Belfast and Wednesday night in Dublin, masked youths attacked a force of riot-clad gardai with petrol bombs, a bakery van was burnt, and the rioters quickly disappeared into the flats complex into which gardai rarely venture.

Other signs of anger in the city included the smashing of a shop window in Drimnagh, apparently because it had not closed on Thursday's day of mourning, and the hijacking and burning of a bus in the same area on Monday evening, during which the hunger-strike was referred to.

The following night another bus was set on fire near Phoenix Park and there were repetitions of bus burnings on the Northside of the city on Wednesday.

RIOTING

But by far the most serious rioting in Dublin, since the burning of the British embassy in 1972, began on the night of Tuesday 12th May following the news of Francis Hughes' death.

A march from the GPO to the British embassy in Ballsbridge again met a force of scores of riot-clad gardai guarding the building. Stones were thrown, and gardai baton-charged the marchers.

In the ensuing events, many people were injured, including a man kicked unconscious by gardai when cornered in a garden. Young women were particular targets for the batons and a nurse - identifying herself as such, as she ran to help the wounded - was also beaten to the ground.

After the marchers had turned and run back towards the city centre, gardai continued to baton at random those walking along the pavements, en route, including a number of people totally unconnected with the march.

On the way back to the city centre British-owned buildings were the targets for attack from some of the demonstrators, and among those damaged were the Lombard and Ulster banks, and British airways, and several other offices in the Mount Street area.

ANGER

On Wednesday, about two thousand people again gathered at the GPO in Dublin's O'Connell Street. Those attending were mostly young people and it was obvious that there was a mood of genuine anger and frustration at the continued lack of movement from the Free State authorities to support



● Above and right: riot-clad gardai baton H-Block demonstrators outside the British embassy, last Tuesday

the hunger-strikers.

The ranks of gardai, with shields and batons ready, guarding so ostentatiously the British Home Stores, was also causing a major distraction for those attending the meeting.

The speakers at the meeting all emphasised the need for peaceful marches and the containment of anger. But in some cases it could be said that condemnation of the previous night's rioters displayed small effort to understand the justifiable anger of newly-aroused youth.

The march which followed the meeting was inexplicably delayed, whilst an unauthorised orator was allowed to harangue the crowd from the platform. The confusion caused, presumably, by injection from somewhat inexperienced stewards, was compounded when the march, again inexplicably, turned on its way to Leinster House and headed back to O'Connell Street.

VICIOUS

About three or four petrol bombs were hurled at the gardai at the British Home Stores and the march broke up in the face of baton charges from gardai at front and rear. As on the previous night the gardai attacks were particularly vicious.

A report in Thursday's *'Irish Press'* records: "At least ten people were beaten to the ground and hit repeatedly...."

"A number of young people on their way home through the city centre were caught up in the clashes and slightly injured...."

"... six gardai motorcyclists



drove from O'Connell Street into Cathal Brugha Street in pursuit of three youths. The gardai batoned the youths to the ground, punched and kicked them and then went on in further search."

As the march broke up, many windows of shops in the O'Connell Street area were broken and several cars and buses damaged. In Sean McDermott Street a bus was hijacked, driven across the road and set on fire.

CANCELLED

On Thursday 14th May, the National H-Block/Armagh Committee announced that a vigil that night at the GPO, a march on the British Embassy on Friday night, and another in the city centre on Saturday afternoon were cancelled. Expressing concern at the events of the previous night it said that "small and unrepresentative elements seem set on obstructing the national committee's stated policy of peaceful and dignified demonstrations by engaging in ill-advised and counter-productive confrontations."

Evidence that there are 'agents provocateurs' at work was supplied at Friday afternoon's vigil when a tiny, supposedly left-wing, faction distributed leaflets calling for an end to peaceful protests and for people to come to demonstrations 'prepared to defend themselves'.

This group apparently wishes to turn the anger of concerned youths



away from British targets, against Free State 'cops, courts and prisons', and presumably see the demonstrations fizzle out in total confusion. It is unclear whether this is well thought out counter-revolution or the application of some mad-cap theory which would sacrifice the hunger-strikers rather than undertake political groundwork.

MILITANT

Outside of Dublin, however, it appears that some areas have found a way of separating militant attacks from the peaceful rallies, and thus avoiding the gardai attacks which might present the growth of the crowds on the street.

In a reminder of just how much of the twenty-six counties still rests directly in British hands there has been a spate of arson attacks on British-owned houses in country areas, each time with an H-Block connection established.

On Monday week, May 4th, the Monaghan home of Lord Rossmore was destroyed by fire causing damage estimated at £15 million.

Last Saturday, May 10th, the eleven-bedroomed mansion of British High Court judge, Sir James Conyn-Belvin Hall at Tara in County Meath - was set on fire in the early hours of the morning and almost totally destroyed.

Last Tuesday, May 12th, a summer cottage on the shores of Lough Sheelin in County Cavan, owned by old-Etonian Lord Farnham, who also owns a large estate in the county, was also destroyed by fire.

And early on Wednesday morning, the courthouse in Monaghan, a relic of British oppression still in use, was severely damaged by fire.

ATTACKS

It would appear that in the country at least, the Whiteboys and Ribbonmen may be two hundred years gone but their methods are obviously not forgotten.

The prospect of such attacks on British-owned targets spreading into the city is one that can only put more pressure on the Free State premier to act. The gardai would obviously prefer the discretionary clashes on the streets which at least have the effect of disrupting the campaign's intention to pursue mass peaceful protests.

The prospect of more deaths in the H-Blocks and the inaction of Charles Haughey can only cause the anger and frustration to boiling point.



● Outside of Dublin, there has been a spate of arson attacks against British-owned property - with an H-Block motive - as here (above) against old-Etonian Lord Farnham's cottage in County Cavan

Plastic bullet terror

THE continued firing of lethal plastic bullets by British army and RUC gunmen, not only at rioters, but also — on occasion — indiscriminately at peaceful protesters and passers-by in nationalist ghettos of Belfast and Derry city during the last week, has led to the death of a young teenage girl in Belfast and the injuring of countless others, ranging from small children to elderly people.

Fourteen-year-old Julie Livingstone from Lenadoon in Belfast was shot with a plastic bullet on Tuesday evening, and died as a result of her injuries on Wednesday afternoon.

The gun attack was callously mounted by British forces on women and children engaged in bin-lid bashing at the Stewarts-town Road, near Greenway's shop, to protest at the death, a short time earlier, of Francis Hughes.

The crowd tried to find cover when the gunmen opened up on them but, when the firing stopped, Julie Livingstone was found lying in a pool of blood.

A friend of Julie's, sixteen-year-old Nuala Lowry, recalls: "Just after 8 p.m. we went on a message to my sister's. On our way back up again a car came along. Everyone started to run — there were about forty or fifty people around, mainly women and children. We ran behind the hedge of a sort of field. When we went to get up, Julie couldn't."

There is some confusion over whether the fatal plastic bullet was fired by the British army or RUC. But that murder was committed there is no doubt.

Even RUC supporter Kevin Smyth, of the Sticky Republican Club, publicly stated that the party had received eyewitness reports that the occupant of an RUC landrover had fired a plastic bullet at Julie and her friend, that there was no riot going on at the time, and the RUC man concerned had a clear view and took deliberate aim.

Julie died in hospital on Wednesday afternoon. She was the youngest of thirteen children. Two of her brothers are in the H-Blocks of Long Kesh; Patrick, who is

serving a sentence of natural life, and Martin, who is serving twenty-five years.

DERRY

Throughout the week there were continuous reports of serious injuries as a result of Brit/RUC shootings.

On Thursday week, May 7th, sixteen-year-old Paul Logue from the Waterside in Derry was fired on and hit by a plastic bullet following which he was assaulted by RUC men, receiving a wound to the forehead which required six stitches.

The following night, in the Shantallow area of Derry, sixty-eight-year-old grandfather Patrick Doherty was hit on the chest by a plastic bullet fired at close range from a British army landrover.

He fell to the ground and was assaulted by several Brits who then arrested him. They spat on him and, when the assault continued in the back of the landrover, Patrick Doherty passed out. He awoke in a cell at Strand Road barracks and was eventually taken to hospital where it was discovered that his skull had been fractured.



● PATRICK DOHERTY, aged 68
skull fractured

Another casualty of Friday night in Derry was a twenty-one-year-old man from the Creggan area who was returning home from a night out with two friends.

RUC men fired at them from point-blank range hitting the youth on the face. He was taken to hospital, but despite spending two-and-a-half hours in surgery he lost an eye which was completely shattered.

BELFAST

Friday night in Belfast also saw serious injuries being inflicted on two youths and a man from nationalist areas.

Gerard McGrann, from the New Lodge area, was hit in the thigh by a live round when RUC men opened fire on him.

In Ardoyne, twenty-two-year-old John Wason was hit on the head and chest by plastic bullets after leaving the Crumlin Star social club.

He was knocked unconscious and remained so for almost two days. He is still paralysed down one side of his body.

Thirty-six-year-old Alfred Parker, from the Whitelock area, was hit on the head by a plastic bullet, inflicting a wound which required sixteen stitches.

On Saturday evening, in the Falls Road area, RUC men again opened fire with plastic bullets at the corner of Linden Street. There was only minor stone-throwing in the area at the time.

Fifteen-year-old Dominic Marron was struck, from close range, on the head. He was rushed to the Royal Victoria Hospital where he was put on a life-support machine and placed in an intensive care unit. His injuries, according to doctors, could still prove fatal.

Following the death of Francis Hughes on Tuesday evening, the incidence of injuries increased alarmingly. Late on Tuesday night there were reports to be about fifty people in the Royal Victoria Hospital on Belfast's Falls Road suffering from plastic bullet injuries.

One of the first hit was twenty-year-old Pauline Donnelly from the lower Falls, mother of a five-month-old child.

She was standing in Spinner Street when two RUC landrovers



● JULIE LIVINGSTONE, aged 14
died last Wednesday from plastic bullet wound



● GERARD McGRANN
hit in thigh by live round

● 21-year-old Derry man
eye shattered by plastic bullet



● DOMINIC MARRON, aged 15
injuries could prove fatal

appeared. The RUC opened fire and one of the plastic bullets struck her behind the left ear and she collapsed. Two men who went to her aid were both fired upon and hit by plastic bullets. Frankie Short being struck on the arm and Victor Angelo was hit on the hand and leg.

On Wednesday, just after midday, four-and-a-half-year-old David Madden was coming out of the Holy Trinity school in Turf Lodge with his seven-year-old brother Tony. The RUC drove into the area and opened fire with plastic bullets on the children leaving school.

Young David was struck on the back of the head, and was taken to hospital where he received six stitches for his wound.

Later on Wednesday, at about half-past-six, children were again the target of the RUC. Five-year-old Neil Lynagh from the Grosvenor Road was sitting outside Lappin's shop when the RUC op-

erated fire. He was struck on the left leg, the plastic bullet ripping off skin which he had previously had grafted on over burn wounds.

The use of these lethal plastic bullets in an indiscriminate way by British soldiers and the RUC has increased dramatically over the past ten days. Meanwhile there are mounting loyalist calls for even more lethal 'riot control' weapons to be used to quell the rising anger of the nationalist people. Water cannon and tear gas are amongst those suggested by Official Unionist leader James Molyneux.



● NEIL LYNAGH, aged 5
plastic bullet tore skin in graft off burn wound

Divis man shot dead

A TWENTY-ONE-YEAR-OLD MAN from Divis Flats, in Belfast's lower Falls, was shot dead by the British army on Tuesday evening, two-and-a-half hours after Francis Hughes died on hunger-strike in Long Kesh prison camp.

Emmanuel McLarnon (pictured right) was in Massarene Walk when he was shot by a British army sniper wounding him in the chest. He was taken, mortally wounded, to the nearby Royal Victoria Hospital in a Knights of Malta ambulance which British troops deliberately delayed, en route (pictured above), and died in hospital, leaving behind him a one-year-old child, Roseen, and his wife, Rose, who is expecting their second baby.

Shortly before Emmanuel McLarnon was shot there had been a gun attack on the British army. He was a member of the INLA. He was the second member of that organisation to die in Belfast in five days. James Power, of the Markets, was killed by what was believed to be a premature bomb explosion, the previous Thursday, May 7th, the day of Bobby Sands' funeral.



One day to live

BY SEAMUS BOYLE

WHEN the steadily deteriorating health of twenty-five-year-old South Derry republican Francis Hughes took a critical turn for the worse on Monday morning, thirty hours before he died on Tuesday evening, and with him beginning to slip in and out of consciousness on his fifty-eighth day without food, his parents were amongst those who immediately went to his bedside in the H-Blocks of Long Kesh.

On Monday evening, *An Phoblacht*/Republican News reporter Seamus Boyle spoke to Mr. Patrick Joseph Hughes, a tall dignified man of seventy-two years of age, in the Hughes' newly-built bungalow adjacent to their old farmhouse on their small farm in the townland of Tamlaghtduff near Bellaghy. At that time Francis had less than twenty-four hours to live.

A shaken Mr. Hughes recalled the traumatic visit to his determined son earlier that day: "When we first saw him I thought he was dead. He was just lying there. So I caught him by the hand and I said 'do you know me?' And he woke up and, although he could not see, he said 'that's daddy', and then the mother spoke and he said 'that's mummy'. He told the mother not to be crying and that he was going to heaven and not to worry."

Francis' tremendous spirit of courage and self-sacrifice, on behalf of the other prisoners and the republican cause, immediately shone through. His father recalled: "He said to me 'I'm going to die'. He said, 'Don't see it as a loss, the men coming behind will get the benefit. We didn't go on the strike for ourselves', he said, 'we went on it for justice for the men coming behind us...'. He was getting weaker and weaker and he kept closing his eyes to get a bit of sleep."

CONDITION

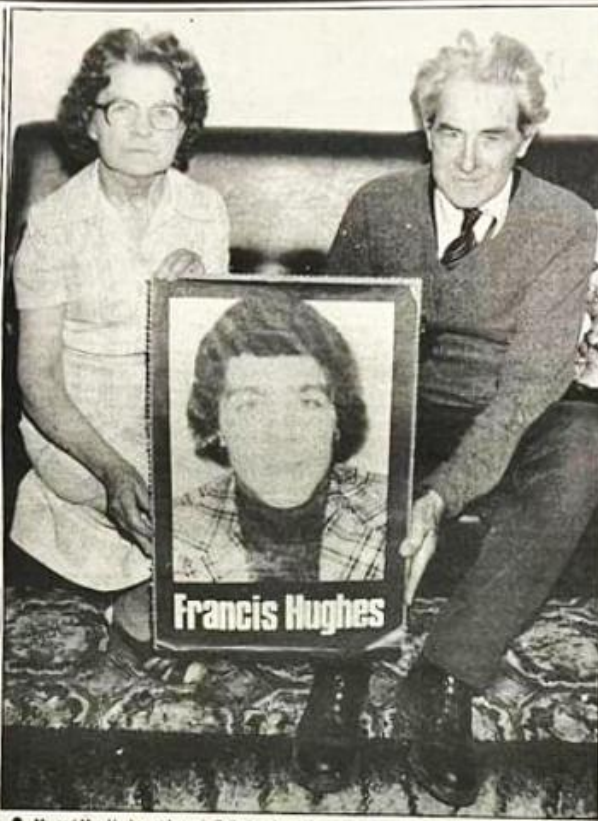
From Monday, members of the Hughes family - Francis has six sisters and three brothers - mounted a round-the-clock bedside vigil until he died.

Until Monday, the family - especially Francis' mother, Mrs. Margaret Hughes, aged 68 - had remained optimistic and had held on to some hope that mounting Irish and international pressure would have forced the British government to concede the prisoners' demands in time to save the life of Francis and the lives of his fellow hunger-strikers.

The shattering effect on members of a family, of seeing their son and brother dying on hunger-strike, can all too easily be underestimated. Whilst remaining fully behind Francis, the Hughes family were all terribly upset on Monday to find him at death's door and believed that at that stage his health had already deteriorated so far that his condition would have been irreversible even if a settlement had come quickly.

His physical condition was much worse, compared even with the immediately previous days when he was already terribly weakened and wizened, and virtually blind. "It's a terrible thing to see a young lad dying," said Mr. Hughes, "but, amazingly, he was still in great spirits."

"His face was just yellow, with eyes sunken, just the same as a corpse lying there. I said 'do you see me, Francis?' He said 'I see the shape of you, but I can't see your face.' When he had got a wee sleep he chatted away and caught my hand and held it tight. I said to him 'you're not too bad' and he said 'ah now, tomorrow or



Mr. and Mrs. Hughes, at home in Bellaghy, shortly before their son's death

Wednesday will see the finish of it."

Francis died shortly before a quarter-to-six on Tuesday, the next evening.

VISITORS

Monday evening's *An Phoblacht*/Republican News interview with Mr. Hughes was held in a small, neat, back bedroom of the Hughes bungalow, the room dominated by a large crucifix on the wall, and with a panoramic view from the window revealing the rolling slopes around the Scribe Road where British soldiers and RUC men feared to tread before Francis' capture in March 1978.

The interview was necessarily confined to the back room because the bungalow was full of visitors. At any one time, and with people frequently coming and going in cars, the large typically country-style kitchen was full of more than a dozen men - relatives, close neighbours, men from Durgiven and Maghera, and even strangers from throughout the county; whilst the sitting room was full of women, again neighbours and relatives; and all sitting in solidarity with Francis and the Hughes family, placidly awaiting the latest news of his condition, and fearing that all too soon they would have to return to Francis' wake after his death at the hands of the intransigent British government.

One young man from Swatragh asked me why I thought the British were being so stubborn on this question, and would not compromise even now. In the Movement's view, I said, the British government's inflexible stance stems from the incorrect view that they can inflict a significant defeat on the IRA, and the morale of its

supporters, through breaking the hunger-strike and defeating the prisoners' struggle. The young man responded that certainly in South Derry, and particularly Swatragh (where following Bobby Sands' death the town had been taken over for a number of hours), support for the IRA had never been better and the amount of bitterness being stored up amongst the people would fuel republican resistance for many a long year.

The scenario in the Hughes home - of the waiting people - had been enacted daily for more than the previous week, from morning time until the early hours of the next morning, according to the same young man. This, as Mr. Hughes explained, was because Francis was such a well-known and popular IRA man in County Derry.

NATIVE

Mr. Hughes, a typical South Derry nationalist rooted in the land, describes himself as a 'native', a republican and a believer in the ideals and tradition of the men of '98, the United Irishmen.

He considers the basic cause of the present 'troubles' to be that Britain gave the 'planters' six counties of Ireland in 1921. Britain was then prepared to sit and watch, or ignore, what went on, he states, referring to the openly sectarian nature of the six-county state, until 'first the civil rights movement, and then the IRA, came along.'

Mr. Hughes prefers to use the terms 'natives' and 'planters' rather than Catholics and Protestants, for, as he rightly says: 'religion doesn't come into it, it's just a question of power.'

His hour-long chat with this *AP/RN* interviewer was twice interrupted. Once for Mr. Hughes to welcome to his home a man,

wife and children, who had driven down from County Antrim to wish Francis and the Hughes family well, and to show their support for the hunger-strike. And, the second time, to give a brief outdoor interview to a Norwegian television camera crew, who were amongst the many media men to descend on the Hughes family in the days before Francis' death.

Standing at a farm gate-post, Mr. Hughes looked an impressive figure as he quietly explained to the visiting interviewer, for the umpteenth time, that he 'did not regret' Francis joining the IRA; that Francis had only 'taken up the gun' because of blatant 'injustice in his land'; and that although he - Mr. Hughes - had initially been opposed to the hunger-strike, once he saw that his son was determined to go on it, he and the rest of the family were '100% behind him'.

BITTER

Returning once more to the back room, Mr. Hughes recalled how anxious Francis had been, initially - on a jail visit, all those long weeks ago - that the family should understand and support his hunger-strike action: once Mr. Hughes had told his son that he was firmly behind him, Francis had shaken him firmly by the hand and thanked him.

Mr. Hughes - later to be backed up by another of his sons, Oliver, aged 31 - said that he and the family now felt increasingly 'bitter' at the attitude of the British government in letting the hunger-strikers die rather than granting them their just demands.

Mr. Hughes also said: "I'm very much disappointed with Charlie Haughey because he hasn't come out and spoken on behalf of the hunger-strikers. I expected him to. His father was reared ten miles up the road here [at Swatragh] and had to leave because of fighting the Brits." On the Free State premier's repeated and doomed efforts to introduce the diversionary and irrelevant European Commission on Human Rights, Mr. Hughes said: "I think it's only a bluff. It's only propaganda. It means nothing. He just doesn't want to do anything. He's just getting himself off the hook. He should call for support for the five demands."

DEAD

Concluding the interview, Mr. Hughes said how hard it had been to leave his son in the H-Blocks that day, and that he feared he would be dead within days if not hours. "This hunger-strike," he said, "it's a bad 'do'. I only hope something good can come out of it after the sacrifice of these men." A hope that can only be turned into reality by the actions of campaigners, rioters and Volunteers on the outside making the Brits pay for their inflexibility and reversing their doomed criminalisation policy before even more lives are lost.

Shortly after the *AP/RN* interview with Mr. Hughes, his son Oliver returned from Francis' bedside in Long Kesh. In an emotional state of distress at the condition of his much-loved and respected brother, Oliver condemned the British government for his brother's impending death and for that of Bobby Sands.

Oliver recalled how one week previously Francis had learnt of his comrade Bobby's death: Francis had heard the prayers in Bobby's cell, and then at about 1.30 in the morning he heard the prayers for the dead and he knew that he had gone.

Two of Francis' sisters, who also visited him on Monday, Vera, aged 37, a housewife from Magherafelt, and Noreen, aged 29, a nurse in Belfast, spoke of their sadness at Francis' plight, and at their difficulty in grasping that - short of a political miracle - their brother would soon be dead. They had come to the family home to comfort their mother. Meanwhile, Francis' youngest sister, Dolours, aged 21, was one of the family still at his bedside and had remained with him, determined to stay in the prison until the bitter end.

THE FUNERAL OF FRANCIS HUGHES



● IRA firing party with rifles at ease



● Mr. Hughes shoulders his son's coffin, with youngest daughter Dolours in the background



● Thousands through the lanes of South Derry

THE FUNERAL OF FRANCIS HUGHES



THE HARASSMENT of Francis Hughes in life, which was one of the reasons he joined the IRA, continued even with his death and the hijacking of his body by the RUC last Wednesday in contravention of the wishes of his family that it be taken through West Belfast where several thousand people had gathered to pay homage. The British, who feared him in life, considered him, and the emotions he aroused, a force to be reckoned with even in death.

The RUC invoked the Flags and Emblems Act to forcibly re-direct the route of the funeral cortege. In Belfast, after leaving the morgue in Forster Green Hospital, it was sent through the loyalist estate of Belvoir Park.

This diversion, when the mourners were assaulted, led to a breach of public order, which was one of the ostensible reasons the RUC had in prohibiting the funeral from passing through West Belfast. In this incident an RUC man spat on the hearse containing Francis Hughes' body.

Last Friday, the day of the funeral, mourners were harassed and were forced by the RUC to disembark several miles outside of Bellaghy and make their way on foot to as near to the Hughes' home on Scribe Road as the massive crowds permitted. Thousands upon thousands of people streamed through Bellaghy towards Scribe Road.

At one point, as a short cut, a path was made across a large field, squeezing the juice out of the grass, which gave off a sweet almost funeral smell. This field commanded a grand view of the surrounding countryside and one could visualise the young Frankie Hughes, armed and on the run, tramping across similar fields by moonlight but alone.

Along many of the lanes there were large numbers of soldiers and RUC men, as well as vehicles including army lorries, armoured cars, Shorelands and jeeps. Behind

the hedges and on a high bank were RUC men with alsatians, one of whom smiled and said, 'What about ya?' before naturally adding, 'you bastard'.

FIRED

At the bottom of an avenue of tall trees at the end of Hughes' farm lane, Volunteers of the Irish Republican Army presented arms and fired three rifle volleys over the coffin of their dead comrade. A guard of honour from the IRA and Cumann na mBan marched slowly as the coffin was carried first by members of the Hughes family and then by friends before being placed in the hearse.

It was the family's intention to have the funeral procession march through the predominantly nationalist town of Bellaghy, but they were prevented from doing this by a thick column of RUC jeeps and a wire barricade. Four helicopters maintained an aerial surveillance of the whole proceedings.

Mr. Joseph Hughes, Francis' father, approached the barricade and said to the RUC brass present that he went to chapel every Sunday along this road and he now wanted to bring his dead son to the church. The RUC were unmoved, and after Mr. Hughes' protest the funeral cortege then took a circuitous route to St. Mary's in Bellaghy for requiem mass.

WREATHS

Afterwards Father Michael Flanagan officiated at the graveside service.

Wreaths were laid on behalf of the Hughes family, GHQ Irish

Republican Army, Derry Brigade IRA, South Derry Command IRA, the Sands family, the McCreesh family, the O'Hara family, Joe McDonnell and Brendan McLaughlin, the National H-Block/Armagh Committee, South Derry Comhairle Ceantair Sinn Féin, Ian Milne (a personal friend and comrade of Frankie's, now on the blanket), Dominic McGlinchey (one of those who along with Francis, was mentioned by the RUC as having been 'wanted'), Thomas and Benedict McIlwee (two Bellaghy blanket men who are cousins of Francis), as well as



● The funeral of Francis Hughes, Bellaghy, South Derry

scores of wreaths from other friends, comrades and sympathisers.

The Last Post was played by two buglers.

ORATION

South Derry republican John Davy chaired the graveside ceremony, and introduced prominent republican Martin McGuinness from Derry who gave the oration. Martin McGuinness said:

"On behalf of the Republican Movement I would like to express our sadness and heartfelt sympathy to Francis' mother, father, sisters and brothers.

"Francis Hughes died on hunger-strike in a British prison surrounded by the enemies of Irish Republicanism. He was sustained throughout the hunger-strike by his republican ideals and his loyal and courageous family.

"It is impossible to imagine the intense suffering and heartache endured by Francis' family through fifty-nine days of hunger-strike. As if this suffering was not enough we had the spectacle of the RUC hijacking the body and ignoring the family's wishes. Throughout this ordeal this good Irish family maintained their dignity; they truly followed the example of Patrick Pearse's family, of James Connolly's family and more recently Bobby Sands' family. They are indeed a credit to the Irish nation.

"The women of Ireland, in particular, can be proud of Mrs. Hughes and Mrs. Sands for the way they have borne their heavy burden. They have shown that the women of Ireland are the backbone of our struggle for freedom.

"To Mr. and Mrs. Hughes I am proud to say that I know your son. I knew him as an unconquered man. Frank Hughes was a dedicated Irish republican, totally committed to the freedom struggle, and to the people of this

country.

"He was a Derry man who loved deeply his area and the people of South Derry. He was a freedom fighter in the South Derry command of the IRA. He knew exactly what he was fighting for, politically aware about the situation in this country, concerned about the poor, the unemployed and all the social evils caused by the division of this country by the British government.

"He became a legend in his own lifetime, on the run from the British forces, his home became the hills and hedges of South Derry, where with his comrades he constantly attacked the uniform of the English crown. The British feared him so much that there were roads no British soldier could travel in safety.

"We are all aware of the circumstances of his arrest. He was uncompromising and unconquered

right through to the system to a soldier of Long Kesh. His comrades drew his strength from his truly can be called a querable man.

"Why did Francis sacrifice his young life? He decided to go on a hunger strike to the death. He was a soldier, did he die in this country in May 1976, six years after the date that the British soldier, Connolly, was executed. He was strangled to death.

"Some may ask, 'mean he died for Ireland?' I mean this. The British government decided prior to 1976 that they would defeat the IRA in





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war effort; that they needed a psychological victory over republicans and that a battle must be fought which they must be sure of winning. So armed with their tanks and guns, torture centres, H-Blocks and a multi-million pound propaganda machine they set about a criminalisation policy against republican prisoners of war, who were armed with nothing but their moral courage to resist.

"They resisted for four long years the tortures of the blanket protest, cellular confinement, but the world did not hear their protest: it listened only to the powerful P-20 lie machine. The prisoners, for four long years, were the H-Blocks' living dead; condemned to an eternity of torture. So they took the only course open to them, that sacred weapon the hunger-strike."

"While on hunger-strike Bobby Sands was elected to represent the people of Fermanagh and

South Tyrone, but the British ignored the bullet box and the wishes of over thirty thousand people in only one area of Ireland.

"The British attitude has little or nothing to do with the conceding of the five demands. Their obstinacy and arrogance arises from the foolish notion that by starving the hunger-strikers into their graves, they somehow can defeat the IRA."

"Margaret Thatcher is an unashamed Unionist who is tramping over what is in essence the age-old desire for national independence, which finds expression in its purest form in the present hunger-strike. So let us be absolutely clear about the intention of the Thatcher government. They are hell-bent on demolishing the national aspirations of the nationalist people of this country and they believe a victory in the prison struggle will advance their perverted aims."

"The hunger-strike has not only brought out the anti-Irish racism of the British parliament but the purveyors of the bloodbath theory and the time-worn claims that the IRA is fomenting sectarian tension."

"We have seen over the last ten weeks the British propaganda machine frantically churn out lie after lie about the purpose of the hunger-strike. To deflect international attention away from Bobby Sands' impending death they unbelievably claimed that the IRA was going to burn down Catholic homes and blame it on the loyalists. Then last night in the wake of Frankie Hughes' death we had the RUC, a force which personifies sectarianism, claiming that the IRA had failed to achieve its objective, which the RUC absurdly claimed was to cause sectarian warfare."

"Let it be clearly stated and understood on this sombre occasion, the IRA has never been



• IRA Volunteers fire a final salute of rifle shots over the body of their comrade, Francis Hughes

a sectarian organisation. It carries out a military campaign against clearly identifiable military and economic targets. UDR, RUC and British army personnel are attacked not because of their religion, but because they are members of the British crown forces whose presence in this country is based not on a democratic mandate but on military superiority."

"The hunger-strike, and the deaths of Bobby and Francis, has exposed in more ways than one those who side with the British and those who do not. The hunger-strike has challenged the political and religious leadership in this country and they have been found wanting."

"In frank terms, John Hume

and Charles Haughey have been whipped into line by Thatcher and instead of standing on their own they have wilted. The question must be posed: why don't they publicly support the five demands? And the only answer to that is that their, and the British, long-term interests are one and the same and they are not prepared to jeopardise those interests."

"But whether John Hume and Charles Haughey move or not their interests are already in jeopardy because of the deaths of Bobby and Frank and the critical condition of Raymond McCreech and Patsy O'Hara, now on their fifty-fifth day of hunger-strike, and who have been joined by Joe McDonnell and Brendan McLaughlin. And the prisoners say, if the need arises, other hunger-

strikers will replace any who die."

"As we stand here today at the graveside of one of Ireland's noblest sons, let us reflect on his suffering, his years on the run, his years of imprisonment and finally his lonely death in a prison cell."

"He epitomises the history of our country: suffering and hardship and sacrifice."

"His body lies here beside us. But he lives in the little streets of Belfast, he lives in the Bogside, he lives in East Tyrone, he lives in Crossmaglen. He will always live in the hearts and minds of unconquerable Irish republicans in all these places."

"They could not break him. They will not break us."



THE FUNERAL OF FRANCIS HUGHES



H-BLOCK IMPRESSIONS

A TRIBUTE
BY JIM GIBNEY



SHORTLY after eight o' clock on Tuesday evening I learned the tragic and shocking news of Francis Hughes' death on the prison grapevine, while in the custody of the gardai at Dundalk barracks. I was arrested at four that afternoon while travelling back to Belfast from there.

Although I had known earlier that day, from speaking with Oliver, Francis' brother, that Francis was slipping deeper into a coma, the knowledge did not cushion the blow.

Lying on the bed in the cell, I stared up at the ceiling and slowly absorbed the sad and sickening news. My mind quickly wandered back to April 1977 when lying in another cell, this time in Belfast's Crumlin Road jail, I heard on the radio of the shooting dead by the British army of a dear comrade of mine, Brendan O' Callaghan. He was gunned down in the forecourt of the Hunting Lodge bar on the Stewartstown Road in Belfast.

A feeling of helplessness had gripped me then and the same feeling returned while I lay gazing into space. And I knew that in several hundred cells, especially in the H-Blocks and Armagh jail, that same feeling, which can only be realised at a time of tragedy by someone entrapped by four walls and a locked steel door, would be gripping the inhabitants.

Other prisoners, and indeed one or two gardai, expressed sadness at the news.

I had known Francis Hughes a very short period of time — approximately four months, or six visits — so I am not in any way qualified to write authoritatively about him, other than about how I found him in the H-Blocks of Long Kesh.

NEWS

On the first visit I accompanied his brother Oliver and veteran republican John Davey from South Derry, who was a very close confidant of Francis. For Oliver and John it was their first visit with Francis since he had broken the news to his family that he would join Bobby Sands on the hunger-strike.

I was looking forward to meeting Francis as I had heard many stories of his sorties against the British army and RUC in his native South Derry. I had also heard of his leg injury, but I was taken aback when I saw him hobble, with the help of a crutch, along the room to where we sat.

His body was virtually bent at right angles when he walked. He greeted everyone with a strong handshake and the broadest smile I have ever seen on anyone's face. He placed the crutch against the wall and sat awkwardly on the edge of his chair.

Beads of perspiration covered his brow and he was a pale green sickly colour. His brother asked him how he was but Francis brushed these enquiries off with a loud laugh and a wave of his long arm.

Before the visit ended he casually remarked that he had to walk over one mile to the visiting area. Normally because of his severe limp he was transported to the visiting area from his cell, but since the prison administration became aware that he was to go on hunger-strike they had cruelly punished him by making him walk this long distance. After the visit John Davey told me that on a previous visit he had to assist Francis off the chair and that he was in constant pain from his leg.

HUMOUR

My impressions of him from the first visit was that he was a man of few words and, before speaking, he weighed his words carefully and ensured that they meant something. He also had a high sense of humour.

My first impressions did not alter from then until I last saw him five visits later and some fifty days into his hunger-strike.

The second visit was when he was sixteen days on hunger-strike. On that occasion I accompanied his father and, again, John Davey. On meeting his father I immediately saw where Francis got the broad smile and the jovial sense of humour. His father is over seventy years of age and carries that graceful and dignified appearance that only aged people acquire.

Francis' appearance was worse than Bobby Sands, whom I had seen the previous

day in the prison hospital and Bobby was thirty days on hunger-strike. I knew from that that his leg injury would eventually take its toll, as indeed it did.

Francis' attitude was one of quiet determination. He spoke to his father about his family and to John Davey about republican business, and on several occasions I had to probe him about his health. In his carefree attitude he replied, 'I'm sound, don't you worry about me'. The following week he was moved to the prison hospital.

DEATH

The next four visits were similar to the previous two. Francis spoke little about his condition and was more concerned about the other hunger-strikers, especially Bobby Sands, who was gradually moving towards death.

On the last visit, which coincided with the visit from the papal envoy Fr. Magee, Francis was suffering great pain. He had partially lost his eyesight and was being violently ill and unable to hold down water. His mother and Oliver were also on the visit. Before seeing Francis we met Fr. Magee and he told us that Humphrey Atkins was totally opposed to granting any concessions to the prisoners.

I told Francis what Fr. Magee had said to us and in his usual quiet resolute manner he said: 'well, that's it. Thatcher will have coffins coming out of here because we are not giving in'.

RUC HIJACK BODY



● RUC hijacks took charge of Francis Hughes' body as soon as it left the mortuary, until it reached Bellaghy

ON Wednesday the body of republican hunger-striker Francis Hughes was hijacked by the RUC from the bereaved family, who were then subject to sickening harassment from that sectarian force.

Francis' body had been removed from the H-Blocks, where he had died on Tuesday evening, to the Forster Green hospital in Belfast for a post-mortem. On Wednesday morning, in compliance with the family's wishes, the hearse was due to pass through nationalist West Belfast on its way to the Hughes' family home in Bellaghy, South Derry. But the RUC decided otherwise.

The full text of a statement from the Hughes family condemning the RUC is printed here.

● WE were told to collect Francis' remains at 2.30 p.m. When members of the family arrived, they were told by the RUC that the hearse would be given an escort as far as Kennedy Way and that every facility would be provided to ensure that this was accomplished with minimum inconvenience to the family.

Fifteen minutes later two senior RUC men arrived and reversed the earlier decision. They invoked the Flags and Emblems Act and informed the family that they (the RUC) had responsibility for the remains and that the family were not permitted to proceed to West Belfast where a large crowd of people had gathered to pay tribute to Francis.

From then until 5.30 p.m., the RUC harassed and tried to intimidate us. Our mother, especially, was very distressed by this continuing encounter. Eventually, against our wishes and under duress, we accepted an undertaking from the RUC that they would give us custody of Francis' body at Toome.

A large force of RUC followed the hearse from the hospital. Then minutes later the RUC forcibly stopped the hearse, which was surrounded by a number of landrovers.

The RUC tried to pull the driver from the hearse. Francis' father was assaulted by the RUC as were other friends and members of the family, during a twenty-minute confrontation. This attack was witnessed by a number of presumes and by Mr. Jimmy Drumm and Mr. Owen Carron, who were also assaulted.

Having received yet another assurance from a senior RUC man who arrived on the scene, we then proceeded once more. Within a few minutes we were stopped by a loyalist mob who, had gathered in a housing estate into which we were led by the RUC. The RUC made no effort to protect us.

At the Randalstown slipway the RUC again forcibly halted the hearse and blocked it off from the family, who were diverted by the RUC towards Toomebridge. The hearse was then taken under very heavy escort through Randalstown.

The RUC refused the family permission to accompany it. Mr. Owen Carron, who was in the hearse, was assaulted and verbally abused by the RUC. He refused to leave the hearse which was taken from Portlancigan and eventually arrived at our home at 7.25 p.m.

The family and friends were blocked at every junction by the RUC and were continually harassed by RUC mobile and stationary patrols. All sides were blocked and we had to run a gauntlet of sectarian insults and remarks.

We, the parents, brothers and sisters of Francis Hughes, murdered by the British government, wish to protest in the strongest possible way at the manner in which Francis' body was hijacked by the RUC, who were obviously acting on the orders of their political masters.

We totally reject the RUC statement and explanation for the disgraceful way they treated us and our dear brother. We wish only to bury him in peace and in a manner befitting his death. As we to be deprived even of this simple and reasonable request.

QUEST



● Thousands of mourners were awaiting the arrival of Francis Hughes' body in West Belfast, before learning of the RUC hijack

hunger-strike.... hunger-strike.... hunger-strike.... hunger-strike

North

THE funeral of Francis Hughes was marked in nationalist areas of the North on Friday with black flag parades, work stoppages and the closure of most shops and businesses.

In Derry, the nationalist part of the city closed down completely and a large and dignified black flag march was held, attended by several thousand people. Many buses left the city conveying people to the funeral itself.

The pattern was the same in County Antrim with closures and work stoppages between 12 noon and 3 p.m. In Lurgan black flag marches, attended by several hundred people, had taken place on Wednesday night in Toghmevan Estate, and on Thursday from the Kilwick area.

In Belfast, nationalist areas came to a standstill on Friday with only essential services running.

The Falls black taxi stopped work for the day and shops, businesses, and white work places there are, closed between 1 p.m. and 2 p.m., with many staying closed throughout the day. A black flag march was held leaving Dunville Park and ending with a wreath-laying ceremony at the republican plot in Milltown cemetery.

Despite the absence of the thousands who travelled to Belfast for the funeral, and despite poor and short notice, a crowd of about fifteen hundred paraded along the Falls Road.

One of the buses carrying Belfast people back from the funeral of Francis Hughes in Belfast came under a heavy stoning attack as it passed through the village of Portpatrick in County Antrim.

A group of loyalists hiding behind a cemetery wall pelted the bus with bricks, breaking every window and injuring several women, including inflicting head injuries on Mrs Susan Dominic from the Cavendish Street area, an old-aged pensioner in her seventies, who had to be taken to hospital.

In marked contrast to the provocative and incendiary attitude of the RUC towards the mourners at the funeral, the RUC stood and watched this attack take place, obviously in agreement with the actions of the loyalist mob.

After the funeral on Thursday week of hunger-striker Bobby Sands, the level of protest activity in support of the prisoners increased markedly in the North.

Many demonstrations, pickets, and vigils were called at very short notice, but, despite lack of publicity, the size of the protests continued to increase, reflecting the unity of the nationalist people in opposition to the death policy of the British government in the H-Blocks.

Following the massive funeral of Bobby Sands in Belfast, the Derry campaigners were quickly back in action. On Friday a mass picket was held at Strand Road RUC barracks following which the crowd of several hundred blocked the expressway behind the Guildhall square. On Saturday a public meeting again attended by a crowd of several hundred was held at the Bogside Inn.

In Belfast, on Saturday, a black flag procession made its way from the Bury Bee in Andersonstown to the Dunville Park where a short rally was held. About two thousand people marched in silence as a mark of respect for Bobby Sands.

At the same time local rallies were also held in Dungannon, County Tyrone, and in Armagh city.

On Sunday, in Gulladuff, County Derry, a crowd of about one thousand gathered despite a heavy RUC presence and a march and rally in support of the hunger-strikers was held in the village.

In North Armagh a march attended by several hundred went from Craigavon to a rally in Lurgan. And in Derry a public meeting was again held at the Bogside Inn.

In Colisland, County Tyrone, a picket of the RUC barracks in the town has been mounted every day since the death of Bobby Sands and these have been followed by rosaries in the square.

On Monday night a local march was held in the Lenadoon area of West Belfast and the rosary was said for the prisoners by several hundred people at Dunville Park.

In a small nationalist enclave called Gubnacale in the Waterside area of Derry, a public meeting was held, attended by several hundred people.



● Belfast rally last Tuesday evening, at Dunville Park, after hearing of Francis Hughes' death



● Black flag march down Belfast's Falls Road last Saturday, May 9th



● Toomebridge protest, last Tuesday

All planned activity on Tuesday was overtaken by the tragic news early in the evening that Francis Hughes had died in the prison hospital at Long Kesh.

As soon as the news broke, bin-lid banging and whistle-blowing was started in all nationalist areas of Belfast and Derry, and road-blockings, rosary meetings, vigils and pickets were spontaneously held throughout the six counties.

In Francis' home town of Bellaghy, a silent black flag vigil was held despite threats from loyalists and a heavy presence of RUC men at the scene. In Derry city three separate demonstrations were held within hours of the

news breaking. A meeting was held in the Guildhall square following a more than one thousand-strong march from the Bogside Inn. A rally in the Shantallow area was followed by a mass picket on the Strand Road RUC barracks while a rally was also held in the Creggan area.

In Belfast, peaceful protest activity centred around local rosary meetings, with people preferring to stay within their own areas. Meetings in the Beechmount area of West Belfast and in the Short Strand in the east of the city were disrupted when the RUC drove through the peaceful protests in an obvious attempt to provoke the crowd.

In a much more serious incident the RUC fired plastic bullets at women banging bin-lids in the Lenadoon area injuring a fourteen-year-old girl Julie Livingstone who died the following day due to her injuries.

In Twinbrook, there was a march of about five hundred. Originally organised to commemorate the death of Bobby Sands, it naturally became a protest at the death of Francis Hughes.

A rally followed by a public rosary was held in Lurgan at Francis Street and a march was also held in Craigavon. In Dungannon over one thousand people gathered in Anne Street during the even-

ing following a march from the Ballygowry housing estate.

Protests continued during the whole of Wednesday. Thousands of people gathered on the Falls Road heard the news that the RUC had hijacked the body of Francis Hughes and were refusing to allow it to pass through West Belfast.

In Camlough, local people sealed off the four approach roads to the town for the entire day to protest at the death of Francis Hughes and in solidarity with the local hunger-striker Raymond McCreesh and his comrades.

hunger-strike....hunger-strike....hunger-strike....hunger-strike

South

FRIDAY'S day of mourning, called to coincide with the funeral of Francis Hughes, met with a major response around the twenty-six counties.

In Dublin, a meeting was held outside the GPO, attended by over one thousand people in the afternoon. The speeches were interspersed with a poetry-reading and the playing of a lament by a lone piper.

In Waterford, several thousand responded to the local trades council call for a shut down and marched in the city centre.

In Wexford town, over half the shops and businesses closed in the afternoon and all factories closed for a short time in the afternoon. Elsewhere in the county, two hundred people attended a meeting in New Ross.

In Cork city, about three thousand marched, with stoppages at the Irish Steel construction site and several small factories. In Cobh a number of factories closed and workers walked out of Mexcom at Ringaskilly and Conyn Chemicals.

In Limerick city, more than five thousand marched through the city with almost all the principal factories in the area represented and shops, houses and businesses closed down. Letters were sent from the meeting to local Fianna Fail representatives.

In County Limerick, over two hundred people marched in Newcastle West and over one hundred attended a meeting in Kilmallick. Other small towns closed down during the afternoon.

In Tralee, the town came to a halt and around three thousand marched. Elsewhere in County Kerry, several hundred people marched in Killybeggs where there was a total shutdown. Across the county closures took place in spite of Chamber of Commerce attempts to resist them.

In Galway, more than two hundred people attended a vigil at which playwrights John Aiken and Margaret O'Arcy read from the writings of Bobby Sands. One hundred workers from the Digital factory attended.

A total shutdown in Sligo town resulted in several thousand attending a march and meeting which was one of the biggest ever held in the town.

In County Donegal a march and meeting after mass in the Letterkenny cathedral drew many hundreds of people. There were also meetings in Buncrana and across South Donegal.

In Monaghan town all factories closed and businesses closed in the afternoon and a massive crowd marched behind a twelve-man IRA colour party following a lone piper.

In Leitrim all the main towns closed in the afternoon with total shutdowns in Ballinamore, Carrick-on-Shannon, Carrigallen, Drinahilly, Drumahaire and Mohill. In several centres prayer vigils were held.

In Dundalk, a trade union demonstration followed a mass for Francis Hughes and one thousand workers marched. In the afternoon thousands more marched to another meeting at which speakers included the sister of Bobby Sands, Bernadette. All factories closed for the afternoon.

Also in County Louth, at Dunliver, where the two main factories closed, four hundred people attended a parade and meeting.

There was immediate reaction to the death of Francis Hughes on Tuesday evening around the twenty-six counties.

Over two thousand people assembled at Dublin's GPO and marched via Leinster House to the British embassy at Ballsbridge. Youths, in angry mood, threw stones at the embassy and the crowd were baton-charged by gardai.

The following day books of condolences were opened at the GPO and on Wednesday evening a minor riot broke out again following a meeting and march in O'Connell Street.

In Monaghan town several hundred people gathered on Tuesday night for prayers and a meeting in the town centre.

In Wexford, around one hundred people attended a vigil. In Limerick, a candlelight vigil was held. In Waterford, many gathered on Wednesday night for a candlelight vigil. The historic Reginald's tower in the city centre was occupied for six hours and a march was held.

In Galway, a vigil was held on Tuesday and Wednesday and a book



● A large rally in Dublin, on the day of Francis Hughes' funeral

of condolences opened. In Tralee on Wednesday over five hundred people took part in a march on the local tax office to protest at the use of taxpayer's money on border collaboration.

In Sligo, there have been well-attended vigils each evening.

In Donegal, prayer meetings were held on Tuesday evening in Killybeggs, where two hundred gathered, and in Ballyshannon, where one hundred took part.

On Wednesday, there were processions in Ballyva and Mounscabes and several hundred attended a vigil in Donegal town.

In Cork city on Wednesday three and a half thousand people marched from Connolly Hall to the National Monument where more than a thousand others joined a ceremony in honour of Francis Hughes. A wreath was laid by Tom Kelleher, survivor of Crossbarry in the Tan War. In Cobh almost one hundred people took part in a march.

In Tipperary town, there was a march of some one thousand people on Thursday afternoon when many shops and factories closed.

In Nawa, a stoppage was called for on Thursday, which turned out to be one of the biggest ever held, and about five hundred workers attended a meeting in the Main Square.

Reports of reaction around the twenty-six counties to the death of Bobby Sands, which did not reach An Phoblacht/Republican News in time for last week's paper, include a silent march of five hundred people in Longford on Wednesday 6th May, a march of fifteen hundred people in Cavan town and a shut down in Ennis on the same day when two thousand people marched.

The previous day, some fifty students from St. Patrick's College, Maynooth, left class and marched eighteen miles to the British embassy in Dublin where a letter protesting against the death of Bobby Sands was received by embassy officials.

And further reports of activity on the day of Mourning on Thursday 7th May, the day of the funeral of Bobby Sands, underline the widespread major response indicated by early assessments.

In Galway, there were factory closures and a march in the city centre. The local ITGWU expressed condolences.

In Sligo, the industrial estate completely closed down for the day and three thousand took part in a march. Elsewhere in County Clare seven hundred marched in Kilrush, three hundred in Ennistymon and one hundred and fifty in Kiltalee.

In Roscommon, workers from Hanley's Meats marched through Rossmore. Most of Clare in County Offaly stopped work for the afternoon. In nearby Meath in County Westmeath a candlelight vigil had been held the previous evening.

Also on Thursday there was a total closure in Cavan town. At Kingstown in County Cavan, six hundred workers at Gypsum Industries stayed out.

In Ballyva, County Kerry, four hundred people attended a vigil, and there was a total shutdown in the town for three hours in the afternoon. Other towns which closed down on Thursday in North Kerry included Ballyva,



● Hunger-strike march in Limerick on the day of Bobby Sands' funeral



● Hunger-strike march in Tralee, County Kerry, on the day of Bobby Sands' funeral

Ballyva and Listowel, where eight hundred people attended a vigil on the previous evening.

In County Mayo, on Thursday there were vigils in Castlebar, Westport and Ballyva. Clonmel in County Tipperary came to a standstill on Thursday afternoon and around seven hundred people attended a meeting in the town centre. In Nawa, County Kildare, a procession was held through the town in the afternoon.

Sixty-four prisoners in the training unit at Mountjoy prison in Dublin stood for one minute's silence in the dining hall on Thursday evening and sent a message of sympathy to the Sands family.

On Friday 8th May, three hundred people took part in a torchlight procession in Cahirciveen, County Kerry.

In Cork city hunger-strike protesters climbed to the roof of the City Hall where they raised a black flag and lowered the tricolour to half-mast. Also on Friday the Merropole Hotel in the city was picketed during the attendance of the Free State premier Charles Haughey at a Fianna Fail meeting.

In Nenagh, County Tipperary, the special vigil for Bobby Sands was held on Friday evening, with two thousand people taking part in a silent march through the town.

In Pettigo, County Donegal, two hundred people assembled and marched across the border to Tollymoreman in County Fermanagh.

On Saturday, a large rally was held in Dublin attended by three thousand people including representative contingents from around the twenty-six counties.

There have been pickets every evening at bridges around the city during the rush-hour and nightly meetings at the GPO. Saturday's rally marched through the city to Leinster House where a letter was handed in addressed to Charles Haughey. Afterwards there was a meeting at the GPO.

In County Cork, on Saturday there were meetings in Skibbereen, Bantry, Durrus, and Clonakilly, which attracted hundreds of people. In Limerick city the daily vigil continued on O'Connell Street.

In County Leitrim, one hundred

people marched from Drumahaire to Clonmel. Three hundred people took part in a march in Donegal town. There was a public meeting in Wexford town. A hunger-strike caravan was maintained as a focal point for protest activity in Ballina, County Mayo.

In County Cavan a march and meeting in Ballyva attracted five hundred people.

Conrad na Gaillige opened its aid shop in Cork with a minute's silence in memory of Bobby Sands. An emergency resolution was passed condemning the British government and calling for an end to diplomatic links with Britain.

In Dublin, on Sunday, there was a picket on the British embassy during the afternoon.

On Monday, May 11th, resolutions in support of the hunger-strikers and in sympathy with the Sands family were passed by Westford County Council, Lough County Council and Cavan County Council. The previous week similar resolutions had been passed by Meath and Navan local councils.

hunger-strike....hunger-strike....hunger-strike....hunger-strike

Abroad

PROTESTS around the world continued to reverberate in the week following the death of Bobby Sands, and surged once again with the news of the death of Francis Hughes last Tuesday.

In the United States, more than ten thousand marchers closed off five Manhattan streets in a protest outside the British consulate in New York on Saturday 9th May. The largest Irish republican demonstration in the last twenty years was mirrored by another massive turnout, spontaneously, on Tuesday with the death of the second hunger-striker.

In San Francisco, two thousand demonstrated. In Boston, there have been daily demonstrations since Bobby Sands' death as there are in Chicago, Philadelphia has also been the venue of major protests.

Meanwhile the Longhorns have announced another one-day boycott of British shipping. And unprecedented media attention continues to be focused on the hunger-strike and on the American tours of former blanket men Seamus Delaney, Noel Cassidy and Charlie Crumley.

Vicor Donahue, the New York city Municipal Employees' Labour leader, has pledged his union's support for the hunger-strikers and the State of Massachusetts assembly has also passed a formal resolution memorializing Bobby Sands and condemning the British government for his murder. Boston city council has renamed the street in which the British consulate is situated, Francis Hughes Avenue.

The American Indian Movement has sent a message of total solidarity with the Irish hunger and the hunger-strikers.

In Canada and Quebec, protests have intensified with the deaths of the hunger-strikers and a statement from seventeen leading trade unionists has declared opposition to "Thatcher's cruel intransigence". A number of pickets on the British Airways office in Hamilton, Ontario, have attracted hundreds of people.

In New Zealand, a twenty-four-hour vigil was held outside the British consulate in Auckland following the death of Bobby Sands. In Wellington the British High Commission has been picketed as has the British trade mission in Christchurch.

In North Melbourne, Australia, there was a huge attendance at a mass in St. Patrick's cathedral for the two dead hunger-strikers.

In Jerusalem, on Monday 11th May, eighty people, including relatives of Palestinian prisoners, picketed the British consulate. Further messages of support from Iran include statements of condolences and solidarity from the Women's Community of the Islamic Revolution, Tehran University and the employees of the Central Bank of Iran.

In France a demonstration on Wednesday night, May 13th, protesting at the death of Francis Hughes, was prevented from reaching the British embassy by a large force of riot police. Elizabeth Kelly and Teresa McCreesh, sisters of hunger-strikers, Patsy O'Hara and Raymond McCreesh, arrived in Paris on Thursday afternoon and hope to meet the president-elect François Mitterand.

The World Federation of Teachers Union in Berlin, which represents seventeen million members, has sent a telegram to Mrs. Thatcher demanding the granting of political status. The World Student Christian Movement, representing twenty-two countries, has sent a similar telegram from its conference in Madrid in Spain.

Following a meeting with Richard Behal of the Sinn Féin Foreign Affairs Bureau, the president of the Basque parliament, Carlos Garaikoetxea, has protested strongly to the British government at the deaths of the hunger-strikers.

Demonstrations and pickets in Flanders have received much Flemish media coverage. On Saturday 9th May a major demonstration was held from the town of Lier to the British/NATO base at Emblem.

On Wednesday 6th May, a major demonstration was held in the Portuguese capital, Lisbon, and a similar demonstration was held in Oporto on Friday 8th May. Richard Behal addressed both gatherings.

In Denmark, torchlight vigils have been held outside the British consulate in Lolland on Tuesday and Wednesday this week lasting twelve hours on each occasion. On Wednesday night a demonstration was held in Copenhagen to protest at the death of Francis Hughes. On



Thursday a demonstration was held outside the British Consulate in Arrhus.

• Hunger strike demonstration, Amsterdam

World renowned author/playwright Dario Fo (who wrote 'Death of an Anarchist') is donating half of a £2,000 prize, awarded to him in Copenhagen, to the H-Block appeal fund, the other half is going to relief in El Salvador.

There was widespread activity by hunger-strike protestors around Britain following the death of Bobby Sands, in addition to rallies in London reported last week.

In Norwich, demonstrators gathered for a picket in the main street in the afternoon of Tuesday 5th May. In Bristol fifty people attended a two-hour vigil in the city centre in the evening.

In Coventry, on Tuesday, fifty protestors occupied the Conservative Party headquarters in the city for two hours and picketed the local radio station. Later in the week in Coventry there was a picket on the local paper offices and a silent protest in Coventry cathedral.

In Cardiff, on Tuesday, demonstrators held a silent vigil at the city hall, where a symbolic black coffin was placed in the foyer. Later in the day both the leading Welsh newspaper offices in the city were picketed.

Also in Wales, on Wednesday 6th May, the students' council at Coleg Harlech called for a twenty-four-hour stoppage and all classes for the day were cancelled. Coleg Harlech is a trade union college catering for about one hundred and fifty adult students. On Thursday 7th May a public meeting was held at the University of London. The following morning protestors occupied the 'Sunday Times' office in London for three hours.

On Saturday, Battersea trades council picketed the local army recruitment office, about forty people taking part.

In Kilburn, West London, East Labour Party, which had earlier in the week condemned the British government and its own party leadership, held a meeting in the morning, and another meeting was held by the London H-Block/Armagh Committee at the same venue in the afternoon.

On Saturday evening, a picket was held at the House of Labour Party leader Michael Foot, by about forty people. The same evening Eilish Carlisle from Belfast RAC addressed a conference of about one thousand women at the Festival of Women's Rights against the Tories held in Islington.

On Sunday 10th May, several hundred people attended a march in Staines to the local constituency office of Northern direct-ruler Humphrey Atkins.

Five republican prisoners at Long Lartin prison in Leicestershire finally ended a six-day rooftop protest in support of the hunger-strikers on Sunday evening. The five, Gerry Cunningham, Paul Holmes, Martin Brady, and Patrick and Andy Mulryan, had begun their protest on Monday afternoon. They received support from picketers outside the jail.

In London the pickets on Downing Street each evening has continued and has attracted larger attendances since the hunger-strike deaths.



• Contingent on May Day parade, Oslo, Norway



• Picket of British High Commission, Auckland, New Zealand, after the death of Bobby Sands



• Picket outside British Airways, Toronto

Hurtful truths from Benn

BY EAMONN MCGRORY

IRONICALLY, the only British political party which has been subject to any degree of internal disagreement as a result of the crisis created by premier Margaret Thatcher's arrogant intransigence to the ongoing H-Block hunger-strike, is the British Labour Party, whose colonial representatives in Ireland — Merlyn Rees, Roy Mason, and Don Concannon — were the architects of that very situation.

Whatever policy differences may exist between the Labour and Conservative parties on other issues, their bi-partisan approach with regard to Ireland has remained intact since 1969 regardless of which party was in office.

The Labour Party has given the Conservative Party's Irish policy support and loyalty, in the current crisis period, 'much as they would have done if Britain had been engaged in a foreign war', according to journalist John Whaley of the 'Sunday Times'.

CHALLENGE

Since the death of Bobby Sands, however, the mutual, seemingly blind, loyalty of both 'socialist' and conservative English gentlemen with regard to their absolute righteousness in their dealings with Ireland has not gone unchallenged.

That challenge, of course, comes from within the ranks of the Labour Party and part of it at least found its roots in the resolution on the H-Blocks adopted by the Home Policy Committee at the initiative of leading left-winger Tony Benn last year, which, whilst not fully supporting the five demands, was at least generally supportive.

That resolution was, of course, immed-



● MEMORIAL TO BOBBY SANDS IN KILBURN, LONDON
the highly emotional spectacle of dying hunger-strikers may — even on a personal 'human' level — provoke internal dissension in the Labour Party over the H-Block issue

ately repudiated by James Callaghan, who, as the then Labour leader, had the responsibility of party whip in maintaining the united front on Ireland. A position which Michael Foot has now taken up with fervour.

And the strains, whatever their causes, have remained. Labour Party MPs broke ranks last week, with a telegram going to Thatcher from twenty-eight back-benchers calling for a change of course. A position which was further articulated by Labour MP Pat Duffy at Westminster on Tuesday week.

Duffy's Commons intervention, although

based on the false premise that the present situation was solely the fault of Conservative politics, was nevertheless welcome. As political commentators have repeatedly pointed out, Thatcher and company have merely been continuing an Irish policy, particularly in relation to the prisons, which was initiated by a Labour government.

CONDEMNED

Internal dissension within the Labour Party, at least on the H-Block issue, was again further demonstrated on Monday of this week with a motion put to the Home Policy Committee by Tony Saunois, a Young Socialist.

The motion, like last year's resolution on the H-Block situation, was generally supportive of the five demands in a diluted manner, also condemned all forms of repression and torture, and ominously pointed to the youth of Ireland as a laboratory for refining techniques which could well be used against the working class in Britain in the future. It naturally, included also an obligatory condemnation of 'terrorism'.

It was supported only by left-wingers Tony Benn, Joan Maynard and Dennis Skinner, and was defeated by a majority, led by Michael Foot, of nine votes to three.

PEAK

But the dissension reached its peak, for this week at any rate, with Tony Benn's comments in an interview on Tuesday of this week which widens the scope of that dissension from the specifics of the hunger-strike and the H-Blocks to include the whole question of the British presence in Ireland.

"There is a view," said Benn, "and I hold it very strongly, that partition in Ireland was a crime against the Irish people,



● TONY BENN will the threat of expulsion from Labour's shadow cabinet cause Benn to retreat from his outspoken position on Ireland?

and that the legitimate objective for this country is to bring about conditions where the Irish people can solve the problems themselves." He went on: "Partition took place without the consent of the majority of the people of Ireland in 1920. It was imposed on Ireland by a British government."

The immediate response by the Labour leadership, to the utterances of such dangerous truths, was typical. The possibility of Benn's expulsions has been strongly mooted on the basis that Don Concannon is the only Labour party member trusted to speak publicly on Ireland; that Labour's Northern Ireland study group has the responsibility for drafting any recommended change in policy; and, predictably, that the truth about Ireland, however rarely it surfaces amongst British politicians, will exacerbate the situation in Ireland.

REASONS

So what are the reasons behind these recent developments?

Firstly, despite a tendency on occasion to ignore it, there is the human element. Even Don Concannon was visibly shaken by his first-hand view of what the present policies, which he first implemented, had led to, when he visited the four hunger-strikers shortly before Bobby Sands' death.

The emotions which shook Concannon were obviously magnified by Labour MPs who were not as adequately ideologically brainwashed as Concannon, and roused some form of sympathetic emotion. That, compounded by the international condemnation which British politicians, in varying degrees, now feel themselves subject to, has led some Labour MPs to demand, at least movement towards, a resolution.

But probably the most telling factor has been the traditional Irish support and membership of the Labour Party which is decisive in many marginal constituencies at election time; a traditional support and membership of long standing as is evident, somewhat distastefully, by the names of many Labour MPs and leaders: Callaghan, Concannon, Duffy and so on.

And finally, of course, there is the factor, to some indeterminable degree, of principle, as is evident in Benn's clear and truthful pronouncements on the British-imposed partition of Ireland. Something which he may well pay for, judging by the current threat to have him expelled from the shadow cabinet, in an opportunistic exercise by Labour's right-wing which has as much to do with Benn's contest for the Labour party leadership as his telling of hurtful truths.



● Appearing at a recent Belfast H-Block conference — along with Bernadette McAliskey (right), Vincent Doherty (far left) and Gerry Adams (second from left) — was Baque MP Inaki Ruizdelpinedo; awareness of such international condemnation on the H-Block issue has led some Labour MPs to demand, at least movement towards, a solution

hunger-strike....hunger-strike....hunger-strike....hunger-strike



● Belfast black flag march



● On the streets of Dublin



● Fr. Brian McCreesh, brother of hunger-striker Raymond, addressing Dublin GPO rally



● Mourning Bobby Sands in Belfast



● Reciting the rosary on Belfast's Falls Road



● Picketers of the British consulate in Jerusalem included relatives of Palestinian prisoners

National H-Block/ Armagh Committee OPEN CONFERENCE

BY SEAMUS ROYLE

ESSENTIAL GUIDELINES

AN EMERGENCY open conference on the hunger-strike crisis was held in the Lake Glen hotel in Andersinstown, Belfast, last Sunday.

The conference, organised by the National H-Block/Armagh Committee in the wake of Bobby Sands' death, was attended by several hundred activists from local action groups nationwide (there was a good geographical spread), and from Sinn Féin, the Irish Independence Party, Peoples Democracy and the various minuscule left-wing sects whose verbosity unfortunately seems to increase in inverse proportion to their size.

The conference proved to be too hurriedly called and too lacking in preparation to form the hoped-for national focus for the mass protest activity necessary to contribute to saving the lives of the remaining hunger-strikers through winning their five demands.

Genuine impatience was expressed by speakers frustrated at the death of one hunger-striker, Bobby Sands, and fearful that the national committee's strategy of peaceful mass mobilisation and hard lobbying work, particularly of Fianna Fáil and the SDLP, and among the trade unions in the South, would be incapable of saving the life of the next hunger-striker, Francis Hughes, and those following him, particularly Raymond McCreech and Patsy O'Hara.

However, such speakers, and the sizeable numbers who voted with them (who were defeated on a crucial vote threatening the existence of the committee) seemed unable to grasp that a strategy for success of de-stabilising the six and twenty-six county states, and thus forcing the British government to grant the prisoners' demands, needs to encompass two sharply differing, but mutually re-inforcing, aspects: one peaceful, the other involving physical force.

On the one hand, there needs to be the ongoing vital work of the national committee strategy, particularly in the South, but also in the North; of drawing the broadest possible forces on to massive peaceful parades, of building to strike, and of committing the bulk of the rank-and-file of Fianna Fáil and the SDLP to the five demands.

On the other hand, and generally restricted to the North, there urgently needs to be popular street riots, the erection of barricades against the British forces, and other violent acts of civil disobedience building towards the establishment of no-go areas in the nationalist ghettos; plus, of course, the armed actions of IRA Volunteers against military occupation forces.

MISTAKING

Certainly this latter aspect — rioting and shooting — whilst obviously necessary, falls nowhere within the purpose or capability of the national committee. Many of those speaking, and especially those voting, for a different role for the committee, along implicitly 'violent' lines, were mistaking the necessary role of the broad-based committee of organising protests, with the revolutionary role of the Republican Movement.

Even with respect to those peaceful mass mobilising tasks within the brief of the national committee, some of the wilder, particularly academic, varieties of the ultra-left were way off target, ridiculously suggesting that a Sunday evening call by the committee for an indefinite general strike of workers, North and South, would achieve something positive. In fact, of course, making such a call, rather than taking a serious approach to building such action, would only have brought scorn on the national committee.

CONFERENCE

The conference itself was ably



Platform members of Sunday's H-Block conference included (from left to right): Paddy Bolger, Sinn Féin; Kathleen Gallagher, Derry RAC; Vincent Doherty, PO; Bernadette McAisley (chair), National H-Block/Armagh Committee; Fr. Piaras O'Duill, chairperson of the national committee; Patsy O'Hara, former All-Ireland Kerry GAA football star.

chaired by Bernadette McAisley, and began with an introduction by committee chairperson Fr. Piaras O'Duill.

He stated that the callous intransigence of Britain has made the hunger-strike led by Bobby Sands into an international symbol of the struggle for Irish freedom. He also stressed that many previously uncommitted people had now been moved to act by Bobby Sands' death. Such people, he said, should be welcomed into our ranks.

Tom Hartley, of Sinn Féin's POW Department, read statements from the protesting prisoners in the H-Blocks and Armagh jail stressing the prisoners' address at Bobby Sands' death and calling for the new-found nationalist unity in the wake of Bobby's death to be maintained, and for people to move forward and save the lives of the other hunger-strikers.

ADDRESS

An address, 'The Way Forward' by Gerry Adams of the national committee, was read on his behalf by another committee member as he was unavoidably detained elsewhere. Gerry Adams, in his address — the main points of which follow — first of all placed the present prison crisis in its historical and political context, pointing out the central and decisive importance to the British of their 'criminalisation' policy.

"This," he said, "will help us to understand why the British government has refused to concede what are seen even by those who are politically opposed to the political prisoners as reasonable and humane living conditions for any class of prisoner....

"That it is not caused merely by a brutal prison administration or by benign English ministers who don't understand or who choose not to understand what they are doing is also becoming clearer to increasing

numbers of people.

"British intransigence is not the only reason for her refusal to end the H-Block/Armagh crisis. The British government has always had the capacity and sophistication to undermine situations which threaten the status quo. The H-Block/Armagh situation does not yet present that threat, though it has the potential to do so, but until then the British government will persist with its calculated and clearly defined strategy, and as part of that, its 'criminalisation' policy....

"That the criminalisation policy is actually fuelling the resistance struggle, especially with the recent well-publicised murder of Volunteer Bobby Sands MP, and the continuing and escalating hunger-strike is obvious and must come day down upon Margaret Thatcher. That the protest campaign outside the prisons has not moved her without the death of a prisoner must be sadly admitted by us all. What we must now address ourselves to is the winning of these demands before a second, third, fourth, fifth or sixth death occurs in the prison hospital of Long Kesh....

FUNERAL

"Bobby Sands' funeral will be remembered by all for its size. Let there be no doubt that Bobby Sands clearly understood that should his death have been necessary because of British intransigence, then the circumstances of his death would have had a unifying effect upon the nationalist people. Bobby Sands was right and the massive funeral is proof of that. We, in human and political terms, must therefore strive to match his sacrifice by welcoming into this campaign those who have now responded to the prisoners' struggle.

"On a personal level we must welcome hitherto-uncommitted neighbours and friends. We must channel their newly-found support

into active mobilisation behind the prisoners' demands.... The more people we have with us, the fewer we will have against us.

"On a political level our watchword must be found in the slogan 'unity is strength'. We must build a united nationalist front against the British government. Of course, we will have differences and should be jealous of our own political philosophies but the five demands of the prisoners form sufficient basis for unity among the nationalist grass-roots of all the parties in this country....

"The national committee recognises the vital importance of industrial involvement by workers in the campaign. Within the trade union and labour movement there is a continued need for a realisation by H-Block activists of the fact that industrial support by workers for prisoners can only be organised from within the workers' organisations by the workers themselves or by those with whom they identify. Premature or ultra-leftist demands for workers' action do not and cannot replace actual work....

"Finally, we turn to the question of peaceful demonstrations and rallies. While everyone accepts that much more than passive protests are needed, they must remain an important and central function of this committee. Sporadic, uncontrolled rioting on a small scale forms no part of this strategy and is counter-productive. Mass, peaceful demonstrations need to continue, going from strength to strength. That is the task which the national committee must accomplish, regardless, but mindful, of frustrations at local level."

DISCUSSION

Following a confused discussion with plenty of meaningless abstract calls for a general strike and other such figments of the imagination of fevered ultra-left brows, Gerry Adams himself summed up.

He pointed out that demands and calls for action are not enough.

The mass work on the ground still needs doing. To call prematurely, and unsuccessfully, for a general strike, for example, would be seen by the enemies of the campaign as a massive defeat for it.

The national committee strategy has not worked only because the work has not been done. Systematic work on the ground, Gerry Adams concluded, still needs doing amongst the trade unions, the GAA, indeed amongst the nationalist people. We should not be wasting our time merely sloganising.

MOTIONS

The conference's first session then closed, in mid-afternoon, and in the second session numerous motions, some sober, many fanciful or merely wasted paper and breath, were each briefly discussed and voted upon.

Unfortunately nothing significantly new in terms of proposals, or fresh forces available, came out of the conference, although the main address provided essential guidelines.

One motion passed, and a recurring theme, was that the conference was disgusted and angry at the ambivalent attitude of Free State premier Charles Haughey and SDLP leader John Hume towards the British government's dogmatic stance. The conference called for caucuses to be set up within Fianna Fáil and the SDLP by those party members who support the prisoners' five demands, to win further support within each party.

With respect to the forthcoming local government elections in the North, a call was issued that nationalist councillors should adopt the prisoners' five demands as part of their platform, and that otherwise local action groups should campaign against them. A national demonstration was called for, to the British embassy in Dublin. The general national committee policy of mass mobilisation on a broad basis was endorsed.

PATSY O'HARA

BY PETER HAYES

TWENTY-THREE-YEAR-OLD Patsy O'Hara from Derry city, who will have been fifty-seven days on hunger-strike this Sunday, was the former leader of the Irish National Liberation Army prisoners in the H-Blocks, and joined IRA Volunteer Raymond McCreesh on the hunger-strike on March 22nd, three weeks after Bobby Sands and one week after Francis Hughes.

Since then, they have witnessed the removal of the emaciated bodies of their two dead comrades and have been joined by two more blanket men on the fast, Joe McDonnell from Belfast, last Saturday May 9th, and Brendan McLaughlin from County Derry, last Thursday May 14th.

Despite the horrific trauma of losing two of their comrades whom they have lived with for several weeks in the hospital (ironically being allowed to associate with each other in the evenings, which is prohibited in the H-Blocks and which is one of their five demands) and despite the agony and pain, both Patsy O'Hara and Raymond McCreesh, with incredible courage, have refused to waver.

Patsy O'Hara was born on July 11th 1957 at Bishop Street in Derry city.

His parents owned a small public house and grocery shop above which the family lived. His oldest brother, Sean Seamus, who is presently unemployed, was interned in Long Kesh for almost four years. The second eldest in the family, Tony, is presently on the blanket in H-Block serving five years and only saw his brother recently, for a short half-hour and accompanied by a prison warden, on the forty-sixth day of Patsy's hunger-strike in the H-Block hospital.

The youngest in the O'Hara family is twenty-one-year-old Elizabeth, who is particularly fond of Patsy, and says that she was 'more close to him than anyone in the family'.

Before 'the troubles' destroyed the family life of the O'Haras, and the overwhelming influence of being an oppressed youth concerned about his country drove Patsy to militant republicanism, there is the interesting history of his near antecedents which must have produced delight in Patsy's young heart.

GRANDFATHER

Patsy's maternal grandfather, James McCluskey, joined the British army as a young man and went off to fight in the first World War. He received nine shrapnel wounds at Ypres and was retired on a full pension.

However, on returning to Ireland his patriotism was set alight by Irish resistance and the terror of British rule. He duly threw out his pension book, did not draw any more money and joined the Republican Movement. He transported men and weapons along the Foyle,

the Quay, into Derry in the twenties.

He inherited a public house and bookmakers, in Foyle Street, and was a great friend of veteran Derry republican Sean Keenan's father, also named Sean.

Mrs. Peggy O'Hara can recall old Sean Keenan being arrested just before the outbreak of the second World War. Her father's serious illness resulted in him escaping internment and he died shortly afterwards in 1939.

Mrs. O'Hara's aunt was married to John Mulhern, a Roscommon man, who was in the RIC up until its disbandment in 1921.

"When my father died in 1939," says Mrs. O'Hara, "John Mulhern, who was living in Bishop Street, and owned a bar and a grocery shop, took us in to look after us. I remember him telling us that he didn't just go and join the RIC, but it was because there were so many in the family and times were hard."

"My father was a known IRA man and my uncle reared me, and I was often slapped about this. Patsy used to hear this as a child, but Patsy is a very, very, straight young fellow and he was a wee bit bigoted about my uncle being a policeman."

"But a number of years ago Patsy came into me after speaking to an old republican from Carrigans in Donegal, and Patsy says to me, 'You're nothing to be ashamed of, your uncle being a policeman, because that man was telling me that even though he was an RIC man, he was very, very helpful to the IRA!'"

FAMILY

Mr. and Mrs. O'Hara say that they were a very close family. At present she is an amenities worker with Derry council. Mr. James O'Hara has been a textile worker at Courtalds for the past four-and-a-half years and before that he was a docker.

That trait of courage which Patsy was to show in later years was in him from the start, says Mr. O'Hara. "No matter who got into trouble in the street outside, Patsy was the boy to go out and do all the fighting for him. He was the fighting man about the area and didn't care how big they were. He would tackle them. I even saw him fighting men, and in no way could they stop him. He would keep at them. He was like a wee bull terrier!"

Apparently, up until he was about twelve years of age, Patsy was fat and small, 'a wee barrel', says his mother. Then suddenly he shot up to grow to over six foot two inches.

Elizabeth, his sister, recalls Patsy: "He was a mad hatter. When we were young he used to always play tricks on me, mother and father. We used to play a game of cards and whoever lost had to do all the things that everybody told him."

"We all won a card game once and made Patsy crawl up the stairs and 'meow' like a cat at my mother's



● Mr. and Mrs. O'Hara are proud of their son's courageous hunger-strike. — 'There is no use me sitting back in the wings and letting someone else's son go. Someone's sons have to go on it and I just happen to be the mother of that son.' (MRS. O'HARA)

bedroom door. She woke up the next day and said, 'Am I going mad? I think I heard a car last night', and we all started to laugh."

The O'Haras' house was open to all their children's friends, and again to scores of the volunteers who descended on Derry from all corners of Ireland when the RIC invaded in August 1969. But before that transformation in people's politics came, Mrs. O'Hara still lived for her family alone.

She was especially proud of her eldest son, Sean Seamus, who had passed his eleven plus and went to college.

PROTESTS

When Sean was in his early teens he joined the housing action group, around 1967. Mrs. O'Hara's conception of which was Sean 'helping get people homes'.

"But, one day, someone came in to me when I was working in the bar, and said, 'Your son is down in the Guildhall marching up and down with a placard'."

"I went down and stood and looked and Finbar O'Doherty was standing at the side and wee fellows were going up and down. I went over to Sean and said, 'Who gave you that?' He said, 'Finbar'. I took the placard off Sean and went over to Finbar, put it in his hand, and hit him with my umbrella."

Mrs. O'Hara laughs when she recalls this incident, as shortly afterwards she was to have her eyes opened.

"After that, I went to protests wherever Sean was, thinking that I could protect him! I remember the October 1968 march because my

husband's brother, Sean, had just been buried.

"We went to the peaceful march over at the Waterside station and saw the people being beaten into the ground. That was the first time that I ever saw water cannon, they were like something from outer space."

"We thought we had to watch Sean, but to my astonishment Patsy and Tony had slipped away, and Patsy was astonished and started by what he saw."

INCIDENT

Later, Patsy was to write about this incident:

"The mood of the crowd was one of solidarity. People believed they were right and that a great injustice had been done to them. The crowds came in their thousands from every part of the city and as they moved down Duke Street chanting slogans, 'One man one vote', and singing 'We shall overcome', I had the feeling that a people united, and on the move, were unstoppable."

Patsy witnessed the baton charges and said:

"The people were sandwiched in another street and with the Specials coming from both sides, swinging their truncheons at anything that moved. It was a terrifying experience and one which I shall always remember."

Mr. and Mrs. O'Hara believe that it was this incident, when Patsy was aged eleven, followed by the riots in January 1969 and the battle of

(continued on next page)



● ELIZABETH O'HARA
Patsy's younger sister

A determined and courageous Derryman

Portrait
of a
hunger
striker



(Continued from previous page)

the Bogside in August 1969 that aroused passionate feelings of nationalism, and then republicanism, in their son.

"Every day, he saw something different happening," says his father. "People getting beaten up, raids and coffins coming out. This was his environment."

JOINED

Elizabeth, Patsy's younger sister, recalls the coming of the British army in force in August 1969.

"One day, shortly after the British soldiers came into Derry, Patsy and I were walking through Bishop's Gate. 'Oh look, look at the soldiers', said I, in wonderment. Patsy hit me a dig in the arm. 'You'll see enough of them'. 'He knew even then. He was very sincere and knows exactly what he is doing.'"

In 1970, Patsy joined Na Fianna Éireann, drilled and trained in Celtic Park.

Early in 1971, and though he was very young, he joined the Patrick Pearse Sinn Féin cumann in the Bogside, selling Easter lilies and newspapers. Internment, introduced in August 1971, hit the O'Hara family particularly severely with the arrest of Sean Seamus in October.

"We never had a proper Christmas since then," says Elizabeth. "When Sean Seamus was interned we never put up decorations and our family has been split up ever since then."

Shortly after Sean's arrest, Patsy

continually harassed, taken in for interrogation and assaulted.

One day, he and a friend were arrested on the Bristow Road. Two soldiers screamed to a halt beside them. Patsy later described this arrest: "We were thrown onto the floor and as they were bringing us to the arrest centre, we were given a beating with their batons and rifles. When we arrived and were getting out of the vehicles we were tripped and fell on our faces."

Three months after his seventeenth birthday he was taken to the notorious interrogation centre at Ballykelly. He was interrogated for three days and then interned with three others who had been held for nine days.

"Long Kesh had been burned a week previously," said Patsy, "and as we flew above the camp in an army helicopter we could see the complete devastation. When we arrived, we were given two blankets and mattresses and put into one of the cages."

"For the next two months we were on a starvation diet, no facilities at all of any kind, and most men lying out open to the elements."

"That December a ceasefire was announced, then internment was phased out. Marilyn Roe also announced at the same time that special category status would be withdrawn on March 1st 1976. I did not know then how much that change of policy would effect me in less than three years."

IRSP

Shortly after his release in April 1975, Patsy joined the ranks of the fledgling Irish Republican Socialist Party, which, the Sticks, using murder, had attempted to strangle at birth. He was free only about two months when he was stopped at the permanent checkpoint on the Letterkenny Road whilst driving his father's car from Buncrana in County Donegal.

The Brits planted a stick of gelignite in the car (such practice was commonplace) and he was charged with possession of explosives. He was remanded in custody for six months, the first time he stopped due to unusual RUC ineptitude at framing him. At the end of the second trial he was acquitted and released after spending ten months in jail.

BLOODY SUNDAY

On January 30th 1972, his father took him to watch the big anti-internment march as it wound its way down from the Creggan.

"I struggled across a banking but was unable to go any further. I watched the march go up into the Brandywell. I could see that it was massive. The rest of my friends went to meet it but I could only go back to my mother's house and listen to it on the radio," said Patsy.

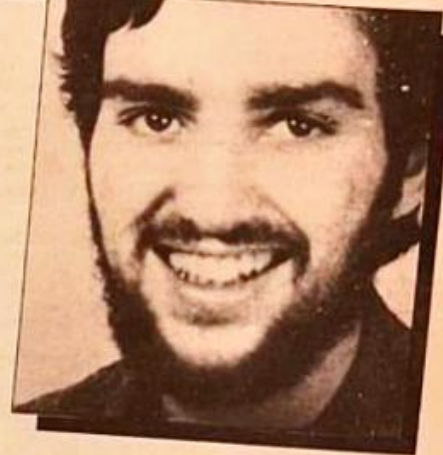
Asked about her feelings over Patsy becoming involved in the struggle, Mrs. O'Hara says: "After October 1968 I thought that that was the right thing to do. I am proud of him, proud of them all."

Mr. O'Hara says: "Personally speaking I knew he would get involved. It was in his nature. He hated bullies all his life, and he saw bullies in uniform and he would tackle them as well."

Shortly after Bloody Sunday, Patsy joined the Republican Clubs and was active until 1973, "when it became apparent that they were firmly on the path of reformism and had abandoned the national question."

INTERNEED

From this time onwards he was



In 1976, Patsy had to stay out of the house for fear of constant arrest. That year, also, his brother Tony was charged with an armed raid, and on the sole evidence of an alleged verbal statement was sentenced to five years in the H-Block.

Despite being 'on the run' Patsy was still fond of some creature comforts!

His father recalls: "Sean Seamus came in late one night and though the whole place was in darkness he didn't put the lights on. He went over to sit down and fell on the floor. He ran up the stairs and said: 'I went to sit down and there was nothing there'."

"Patsy had taken the sofa on top of a red Rover down to his billet in the Brandywell. Then before we would get up in the morning he would get it back up again. When we saw it sitting there in the morning we said to Sean: 'Are you going off your head, or what?' and he was really puzzled."

IMPRISONED

Patsy was also harassed by the Free Staters and once decided to get his own back. He buried an empty beer keg with wires protruding from it, in the sand at Buncrana. The Free Staters, with helicopters and jeeps, came out in force and took a day to defuse his beer keg!

In September 1976 he was again arrested in the North and along with four others charged with possessing a weapon. During the remand hearings he protested against withdrawal of political status.

The charge was withdrawn after four months, indicating how the law is twisted to intern people by remanding them in custody and dropping the charges before it comes to trial.

In June 1977, he was imprisoned for the fourth time. On this occasion, after a seven-day detention in Dublin's Bridewell, he was charged with holding a Garda at gunpoint. He was released on bail six weeks later and was eventually acquitted in January 1978.

Whilst living in the Free State, Patsy was elected to the Ard Comhairle of the Irish Republican Socialist Party, was active in the Bray area, and campaigned against the special courts.

In January 1979 he moved back to Derry but was arrested on May 14th 1979 and was charged with possessing a hand grenade. The only

evidence against him was the word of two British soldiers who said that they saw him throw an object into some bushes.

In January 1980 he was sentenced to eight years in jail and went on the blanket.

HUNGER-STRIKE

What were Mrs. O'Hara's feelings when he told her he was going on hunger-strike?

"My feelings at the start, when he went on hunger-strike, were that I thought that they would get their just demands, because it is not very much that they are asking for."

"There is no use in saying I was very vexed and all the rest of it. There is no use me sitting back in the wings and letting someone else's son go. Someone's sons have to go on it and I just happen to be the mother of that son."

What has the last eight weeks been like?

"It has been terrible," said Mrs. O'Hara.

"Nobody knows it until it happens to themselves. But you always have hope. In fact I always had more than hope because I never thought Maggie Thatcher would let Bobby Sands or Francis Hughes die."

"I say to her, where a mother is concerned, she must have no heart at all, because the prisoners are just looking for what they deserve. And my Patsy hasn't changed one bit since Bobby's and Francis' deaths. He is very determined."

PRINCIPLES

In the face of an implacable British government, and with growing national and international support, it is sheer will-power and determination that drives Patsy O'Hara onward to defend his principles.

Writing shortly before the present hunger-strike began, Patsy O'Hara grimly declared:

"We stand for the freedom of the Irish nation so that future generations will enjoy the prosperity they rightly deserve; free from foreign interference, oppression and exploitation. The real criminals are the British imperialists who have thrived on the blood and sweat of generations of Irish men."

"They have maintained control of Ireland through force of arms and there is only one way to end it. I would rather die than rot in this concrete tomb for years to come."



● TONY O'HARA
Patsy's elder brother, now on the blanket in H-Block

Raymond McCreesh

BY SEAN DELANEY

THE THIRD of the resolutely determined IRA Volunteers to join the H-Block hunger-strike for political status is twenty-four-year-old Raymond McCreesh, from Camlough in South Armagh; a quiet, shy and good-humoured republican who although captured at the early age of nineteen, along with two other Volunteers in a British army ambush, had already almost three years' active republican involvement behind him.

During those years he had established himself as one of the most dedicated and invaluable republican activists in that part of the six counties to which the Brits themselves have - half fearfully, half respectfully - given the name 'bandit country', and which has become a living legend in republican circles, during the present war, for the courage and resourcefulness of its Volunteers: the border land of South Armagh.

Now completing his eighth week on 'hunger-strike', one of the two surviving, critical hunger-strikers since the deaths of Bobby Sands on Tuesday 5th May, and of Francis Hughes last Tuesday evening, Raymond's resolve to hunger-strike to the death if necessary, to snare the prisoners' five demands, is indicated in a smuggled-out letter, written by Patrick Quinn, an H-Block blanket man who was captured along with Raymond, and who received the same fourteen-year sentence:

"I wrote Raymie a couple of letters before he went to the prison hospital. He wrote back, and according to the letter he was in great spirits and very determined. A sign of that determination was the way he finished off by saying: 'Tá seans an go mbeidh mé abhaile romhat, a charr', which means: 'There is a chance I will be home before you, my friend'."

Captured in June 1976, and sentenced in March 1977, when he refused to recognise the court, Raymond would have been due for release in little over two years' time had he not embarked on his principled protest for political status, which has led him, ultimately, to hunger-strike.

FAMILY

Raymond Peter McCreesh, the seventh in a family of eight children, was born in a small, semi-detached house at St. Malachy's Park, Camlough - where the family still live - on February 25th 1957.

The McCreeshes, a nationalist family in a staunchly nationalist area, have been rooted in South Armagh for seven generations, and both of Raymond's parents - James, aged 55, a retired local council worker, and Susan (whose maiden name is Quigley), aged 50, come from the nearby townland of Dorsey. They were married in 1945, in the parish of Cullyhanna, and lived in Dorsey until around 1961, when they moved to their present home in Camlough.

Raymond is a quiet but very lively person, very good-natured and - like other members of his family - extremely witty. Not the sort of person who would push himself forward if he was in a crowd, and indeed often rather a shy person in his personal relationships until he knows the person well. Nevertheless, in his republican capacity he was known as a capable, dedicated and completely committed Volunteer who could show leadership and aggression where necessary.

His family recall that he can also be very quick-tempered, but will never hold malice against

Portrait of a hunger striker



anyone, and that 'if he wants to do something he can be stubborn, but you can get round him'.

Among both his family and his republican associates, Raymond is renowned for his laughter and for 'always having a wee smile on him'. His sense of humour has remained even during his four-year incarceration in the H-Blocks, as well as during his hunger-strike where he has continued to insist that he is 'just fine'.

SCHOOL

Raymond went first to Camlough primary school, and then to St. Coleman's college in Newry (where former hunger-striker Leo Green also went, and where former hunger-striker Sean McKenna, whose father worked there as a caretaker, lived for many years).

It was at St. Coleman's that Raymond met Danny McGuinness, also from Camlough, and the two became steadfast friends. They later became republican comrades, and Danny too - then a nineteen-year-old student who had just completed his 'A' levels - was captured along with Raymond and Patrick Quinn, and is now in the H-Blocks.

He saw Raymond in February, for the first time since



● Raymond (left) and brother Michael at Camlough primary school, 1964



● THE MCCREESH FAMILY: from left to right: Raymond; Teresa, now aged 21; Patrick, now aged 35; Mrs. McCreesh, Fr. Brian, now aged 32, and with a parish in Coalisland; Michael, now aged 28; Marie, now aged 33, married with four children and living in England; Malachy, now aged 29, and Bridie, now aged 31, married with one child, and living in Australia - the photograph was taken at Fr. Brian's ordination in June 1973

their trial, shortly before the latter embarked on his hunger-strike.

At school, Raymond's strongest interest was in Irish language and Irish history, and he read widely in those subjects. His understanding of Irish history led him to a fervently nationalist outlook, and he was regarded as a 'hothead' in his history classes, and as being generally 'very conscious of his Irishness'.

He was also a sportsman, and played under-16 and Minor football for Carrickcruppin gaelic football club, as well as taking a keen interest in the local youth club where he played basketball and pool, and was regarded as a good shookey player. He was also an enthusiastic card player, but appears not to have had very good luck, on one occasion - in exasperation - dealing the whole pack of cards, one by one, into the lighted stove!

When he was fourteen years old, Raymond got a weekend job working on a milk round through the South Armagh border area, around Mullaghbawn and Dromintee. Later on, after leaving his job in Lisburn, he worked full-time on the milk round, where he would always stop and chat to customers. He became a great favourite amongst them and many enquire about him to this day.

It was in this border area, around places such as Dromintee, Forkhill, Belleek and Newtownhamilton, as well as his native Camlough, that Raymond was soon to become an active and dedicated IRA Volunteer.

RESISTANCE

During the early seventies, the South Armagh border area was the stamping ground of the British army's Parachute regiment, operating out of Bessbrook camp less than two miles from Raymond's home. Stories of their widespread brutality and harassment of local people abound, and built up then a degree of resentment and resistance among most of the nationalist population that is seen to this day.

The SAS terror regiment began operating in this area in large numbers too, in a vain attempt to

counter republican successes, and the high level of assassinations of local people on both sides of the South Armagh border, notably of three members of the Revuey family in 1975, was believed locally to have been the work both of the SAS, and of UDR and RUC members holding dual membership with 'illegal' loyalist paramilitary organisations.

Given this scenario and Raymond's understanding of Irish history, it is small wonder that he became involved in the republican struggle.

JOINED

He first of all joined Na Fianna Eirann early in 1973, but left that within a few months, and towards the end of that year joined the Irish Republican Army's 1st Battalion, South Armagh.

Even before joining the IRA, and despite his very young age, Raymond - with remarkable awareness and maturity - became one of the first Volunteers in the South Armagh area to adopt a very low, security-conscious, republican profile. Most of his former Fianna comrades simply assumed he had dropped out of republican activity when he left them, and he would have been unknown as a republican to almost everyone except those with whom he worked closely on operations.

He rarely drank, but if occasionally in a pub he would not discuss either politics or his own activities, and he rarely attended demonstrations or indeed anything which would have brought him to the attention of the enemy.

It was because of this remarkable self-discipline and discretion - a regime breached only on one occasion - that during his years of intense republican involvement Raymond was never once arrested or even held for screening in the North, and only twice was held briefly by gardai - once as he travelled to a wedding in a car along with a well-known republican.

Consequently, Raymond was never obliged to go 'on the run', continuing to live at home till the evening of his capture, and always careful not to cause his family any concern or alarm.

Fitted in with his republican

activities, Raymond would relax by going to dances or by going to watch football matches at weekends. His only holiday away from home was a week spent in London, at his sister Marie's home, in the summer of 1975, but he longed throughout to be back in South Armagh. Nevertheless, he and Danny McGuinness had planned to go on holiday to France shortly after Danny's 'A' levels, but capture and imprisonment were to intervene.

WORK

After leaving school, Raymond himself spent a year at Newry technical college studying fabrication engineering, and afterwards got a job at Gambles Simms (Steel) Ltd. in Lisburn, where he was a member of the skilled section of the National Union of Sheet Metal Workers, Coppermiths, and Heating and Domestic Engineers, while serving his apprenticeship. He had a conscientious approach to his craft but was obliged to leave after a year because of a fear of assassination.

Each day he travelled to work from Newry, in a bus along with four or five mates who had got jobs there too from the technical college, but the prevailing high level of sectarian assassinations, and the suspicion justifiably felt of the predominantly loyalist workforce at Gambles Simms, made Raymond, and many other nationalist workers, decide that travelling such a regular route through loyalist countryside was simply too risky.

So, after leaving the Lisburn factory, Raymond began to work full-time as a milk roundman, an occupation which would greatly have increased his knowledge of the surrounding countryside, as well as enabling him to observe the movements of British army patrols and any other untoward activity in the area.

ACTIVITY

Republican activity in that area during those years consisted largely of landmine attacks and ambushes on enemy patrols.

Raymond had a reputation of a republican who was very keen to suggest and take part in operations,

(Continued on next page)

A quiet, good-natured and discreet republican



● Vol. Peter Cleary



● Vol. Jim Loughrie



● Vol. Sean Campbell

(Continued from previous page)

almost invariably working in his own, extremely tight, active service unit, though occasionally when requested — as he frequently was — assisting other units in neighbouring areas with specific operations. He would always carefully consider the pros and cons of any operation, and would never panic or lose his nerve.

In undertaking the hunger-strike, Raymond gave the matter the same careful consideration he would have expended on a military operation. He undertook nothing either in a rush, or for bluff.

The one occasion when Raymond allowed his feelings to get the better of him occurred at a very emotional time for republicans in the South Armagh border area.

On December 8th 1976, Volunteer Jim Loughrie, O/C of South Armagh's 1st Battalion, and Staff Captain Sean Campbell were blown up defusing a landmine they had planted for Brit forces at Killen, Sean Campbell was buried in Kilcurry, County Louth; Jim Loughrie, at his native Dromintie in South Armagh.

At Jim Loughrie's funeral, Staff Captain Peter Cleary called out: 'Volunteers, line up in twos'. Defiant in their grief, unmasked Volunteers — including Raymond, to the surprise of local people, who hadn't guessed of his involvement — stepped forward as Brit helicopters droned overhead.

From that time on, it is possible that the Brits were aware of Raymond's involvement, but so careful was he, ordinarily, that not until his capture did they have evidence of real involvement sufficient to charge him.

A little over four months later, Peter Cleary was abducted by SAS gunmen, on April 15th 1976, from a house fifty yards north of the border, which he had crossed to meet his fiancée who was living in the house. He was dragged away, beaten unconscious and shot dead.

CAPTURE

The operation which led to the capture of Raymond, his boyhood friend Danny McGuinness, and Patrick Quinn, took place on June 25th 1976.

An active service unit compris-

ing these three and a fourth Volunteer arrived in a commandeered car at a farmyard in the townland of Sturgen — a mile from Camlough — at about 9.25 p.m.

Their objective was to ambush a Brit observation post which they had located opposite the Mountain House Inn, on the main Newry-Newtonhamilton Road, half a mile away. They were not aware, however, that another British observation post on a steep hillside half-a-mile away had already spotted the four masked, uniformed and armed Volunteers, clearly visible below them, and that radioed helicopter reinforcements were already closing in.

As the fourth Volunteer drove the commandeered car down the road to the agreed ambush point, to act as a lure for the Brits, the other three moved down along the hedge-line of the field, into position. The fourth Volunteer, however, as he returned, as arranged, to rejoin his comrades, spotted British paratroopers on the hillside closing in on his unsuspecting friends, and, although only armed with a short-range Sten gun, opened fire to warn the others.

Immediately, the Brits opened fire with SLRs and light machine guns, churning up the ground around the Volunteers with hundreds of rounds, firing indiscriminately into the nearby farmhouse, and two vehicles parked outside, and killing a grazing cow!

The fourth Volunteer was struck by three bullets, in the leg, arm and chest, but managed to crawl away and to elude the massive follow-up search, escaping safely — though seriously injured — the next day.

Raymond and Patrick Quinn ran zig-zag across open fields to a nearby house, under fire all this time, intending to commandeer a car. Unfortunately, the car belong-

ing to the occupants of the house was parked at a neighbour's house several hundred yards away. Even then the pair might have escaped but that they delayed several minutes waiting for their comrade, Danny McGuinness, who however had got separated from them and had taken cover in a disused quarry outhouse (where he was captured in a follow-up the next day).

The house in which Raymond and Patrick Quinn took cover was immediately besieged by berserk Paratroopers who riddled the house with bullets. Even when the two Volunteers surrendered, after the arrival of a local priest, and came out through the front door with their hands up, the Paras opened fire again and the pair were forced to retreat back into the house.

On the arrival of the RUC, the two Volunteers again surrendered and were taken to Bessbrook barracks where they were questioned and beaten for three days before being charged.

REMARKABLE

One remarkable aspect of the British ambush concerns the role of Lance-Corporal David Jones, a member of the 3rd Battalion of the Parachute Regiment. According to Brit statements at the trial it was he who first opened up on the IRA active service unit from the hillside.

Nine months later, on March 16th 1977, two IRA Volunteers encountered two Paratroopers (at the time seconded to the SAS) in a field outside Maghera in South Derry. In the ensuing gun battle, one SAS man was shot dead, and one IRA Volunteer was captured. The Volunteer's name was Francis Hughes, the dead Brit was Lance-Corporal David Jones of the Parachute Regiment.

In the eighteen months before going on hunger-strike together, Raymond, McGuinness and Francis Hughes shared the same H-Block cell, but were apparently not aware

of what would seem to have been an ironic but supremely fitting example of republican solidarity!

After nine months on remand in Crumlin Road jail, during which time he would have met fellow hunger-striker Bobby Sands, Raymond was tried and convicted, in March 1977, of attempting to kill Brits, possession of a Garand rifle and ammunition, and IRA membership. He received a fourteen-year sentence, and lesser concurrent sentences, after refusing to recognise the court.

In the H-Blocks he immediately joined the blanket protest, and so determined was his resistance to criminalisation that he refused to take his monthly visits for four years, right up until he informed his family of his decision to go on hunger-strike on February 15th this year. He also refused to send out monthly letters, writing only

smuggled 'communications' to his family and friends.

The only member of his family to see him at all during those four years in Long Kesh — two or three times — was his brother, Fr. Brian McCreesh, who occasionally says mass in the H-Blocks.

Like the rest of the McCreesh family, Fr. Brian solidly supports Raymond in his hunger-strike. He explains that an Irish ecclesiastical conference after the death of Terence MacSwiney on hunger-strike determined that a hunger-strike was morally justified if undertaken for 'a just and proportionate end', and he points out that the hunger-striker's aim is to achieve justice by fasting; they do not aim to take their lives, that responsibility lies with the British.

HUNGER-STRIKE

Like Francis Hughes, Raymond volunteered for the earlier hunger-strike, and, when he was not chosen among the first seven, took part in the four-day hunger-strike by thirty republicans until the hunger-strike ended on December 18th last year. (His family joke that even the six loyalists who abandoned their hunger-strike after five days lasted longer than Raymond!)

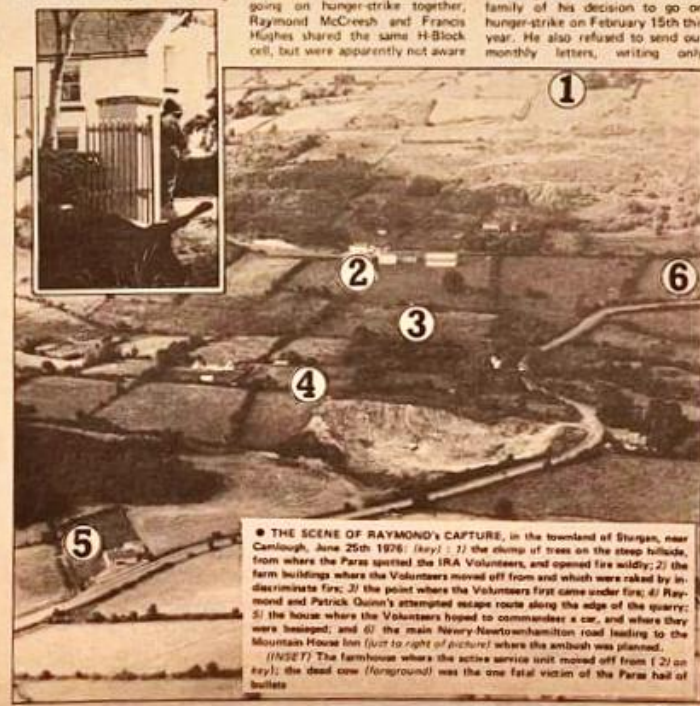
Speaking to his brother Malachy, shortly after Bobby Sands' death, Raymond said what a great loss had been felt by the other hunger-striker, but it had made them more determined than before.

And, still managing to keep his spirits up, when told of his brother, Fr. Brian, campaigning for him on rally platforms, Raymond joked: 'He'll probably get excommunicated for it'.

Now, however, this determined and resolute republican hunger-striker faces death within a few, pain-wracked, tortured, days unless British premier Thatcher can be pushed from her intransigence, and Free State premier Haughey from his cold, opportunist indifference. Already they have allowed two men to die.

Only the determined protest of the Irish people, and growing international pressure, can prevent the imminent death of Raymond McCreesh.

Otherwise, that sombre half-prediction made by him a few weeks ago may become a grim reality: 'Tá seans ann go mbeidh abhail roimhat, a chara.



● THE SCENE OF RAYMOND'S CAPTURE, in the townland of Sturgen, near Camlough, June 25th 1976: (key): 1) the clump of trees on the steep hillside, from where the Paras opened the IRA Volunteers, and opened fire wildly; 2) the farm buildings where the Volunteers moved off from and which were raked by indiscriminate fire; 3) the point where the Volunteers first came under fire; 4) Raymond and Patrick Quinn's attempted escape route along the edge of the quarry; 5) the house where the Volunteers hoped to commandeer a car, and where they were besieged; and 6) the main Newry-Newtonhamilton road leading to the Mountain House Inn (just to right of picture) where the ambush was planned. (INSET) The farmhouse where the active service unit moved off from (2) on the key; the dead cow (foreground) was the one fatal victim of the Paras hail of bullets.

FRANCIS HUGHES

IRA SOLDIER



The final salute, at Bellaghy, South Derry, on Friday, for Francis